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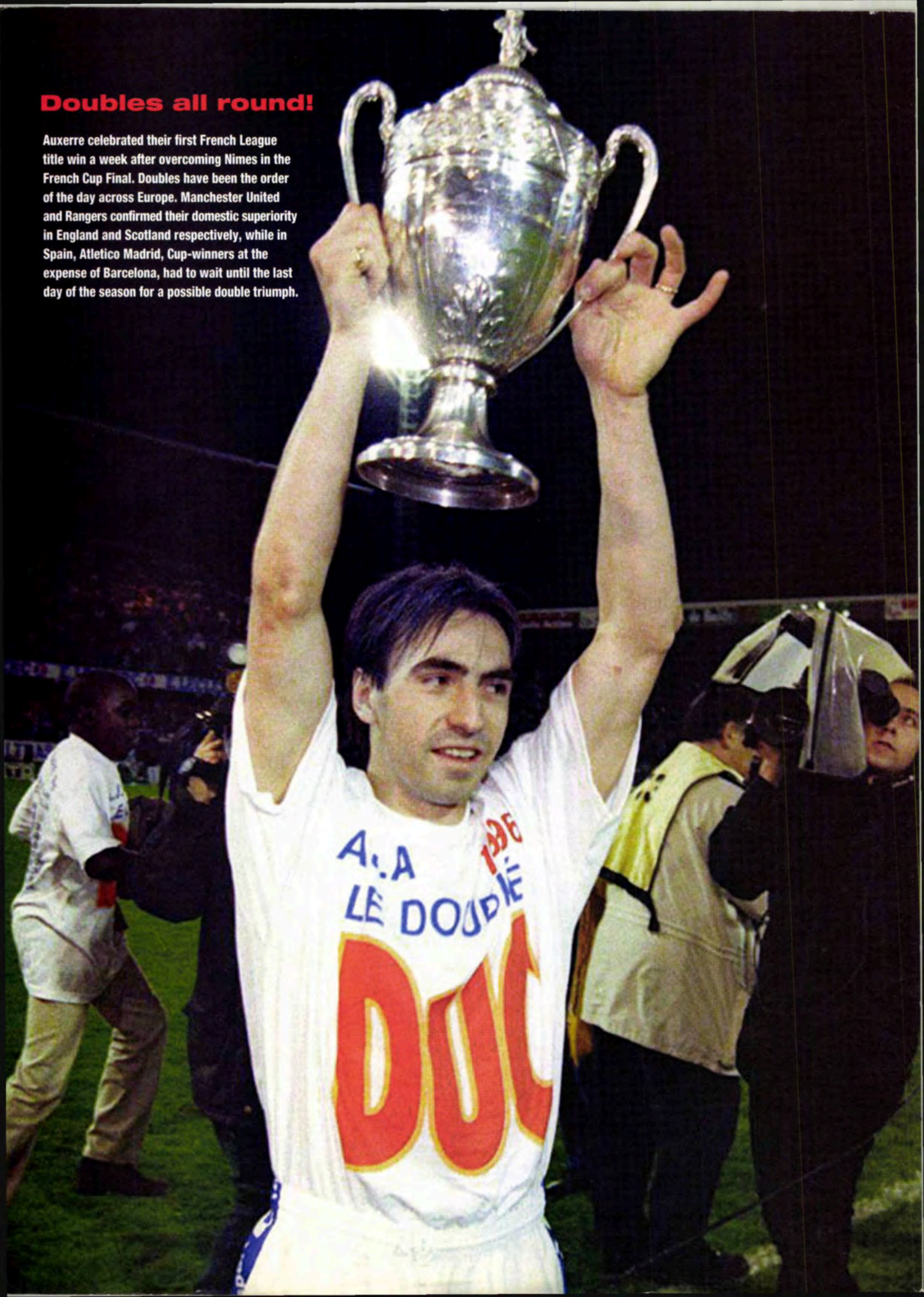

Doubles all round!

Auxerre celebrated their first French League title win a week after overcoming Nimes in the French Cup Final. Doubles have been the order of the day across Europe. Manchester United and Rangers confirmed their domestic superiority in England and Scotland respectively, while in Spain, Atletico Madrid, Cup-winners at the expense of Barcelona, had to wait until the last day of the season for a possible double triumph.

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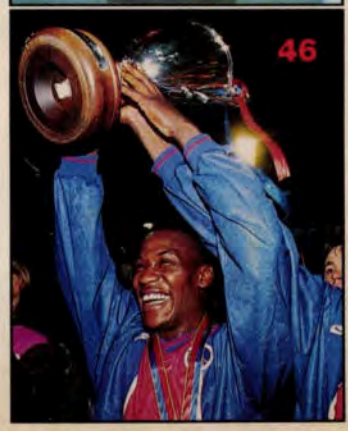


ESM
EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES

THE WORLD SOCCER INTERVIEW

Richard the Lionheart

Richard Moller Nielsen, the man who was decorating his kitchen when he got the call to lead Denmark to European Championship success in 1992, talks to Jim Holden

THE DAPPER man with the grey hair and the smart suits has wandered anonymously through the corridors of English football over the last four years, revelling in stadiums which he believes give you "the real smell" of soccer.

Few poeple have recognised him, demanded an autograph, or stopped him for intelligent conversation about the state of the game. I have seen him stroll round Anfield and Highfield Road, Coventry, recently – and nobody blinked an eye.

Yet, for a few high-profile weeks, Richard Moller Nielsen, the last coach to win the European Championship, will be the senior manager on parade in Euro 96.

Regular *WORLD SOCCER* readers will need less introduction than most. You voted him Manager of the Year in 1992 after he led Denmark to that remarkable triumph in the Final against Germany. His place in history is assured whatever happens during the next month.

The 58-year-old is proof that age does not always wither, that years of experience in coaching and management can be as important as the respect a high-profile superstar such as Franz Beckenbauer earns immediately he switches to the dug-out.

Moller Nielsen has seen and done most things in football – and his countless visits to England will help make Denmark a team to be feared in Euro 96. Nobody's preparation will be more thorough or thoughtful.

The trips have also convinced him that England are the team everyone else must fear. It is not, as some cynics might believe, a convenient view expressed for diplomacy's sake. It's Moller Nielsen's sincerely held belief after four years of almost non-stop travel around Europe monitoring his own Danish stars and their potential opponents.

He said: "Any of the 16 nations competing can win Euro 96. Don't write anyone off. Remember what we did in 1992 before you think this or that team has no chance.

"But if I pick one team with a better chance than most, my favourites, it is definitely England.

"Playing at home is a big advantage, especially with the type of passionate fans you have. England have some wonderful players developing now. I love to watch Steve McManaman and Robbie Fowler at Liverpool, Alan Shearer of Blackburn and all the youngsters at Manchester United.

"The biggest fault in English football is that you are too hard on yourselves. The game there has great qualities, great excitement. I love going to see soccer in stadiums like Old Trafford and St James' Park. The atmosphere is fantastic, and that is a big reason why Euro 96 will be a successful tournament, whoever wins."

'I compare small nations like Denmark with waves in the sea. Some years you have a wave of good players. Other years the sea is calm. For the big nations like England the waves are always crashing in'

Moller Nielsen reminds you very much of former England boss Bobby Robson. There is unquenchable enthusiasm for the game, a recognition that team spirit is just as vital as brilliant skill, a burning desire to accept real challenges wherever they lie.

He talks with wit and clarity, and conjures marvellous analogies to describe his feelings about the game. He does not care if English fans recognise him or not. He loves just being a part of the soccer community.

He lives quietly in the city of Odense on the central Danish island of Fyn, and, unlike so many in soccer now, he does not hide behind an answerphone when you call. He played for home-town club OB Odense, and when injury wrecked a promising career as a brave central defender nicknamed 'Lionheart' he jumped at the chance to coach the club. Thirty years on, he has never been out of work, helping to mould the Danish Dynamite side of the 1980s as assistant to Sepp Piontek (*WORLD SOCCER*'s Manager of the Year in 1983), and succeeding his friend in 1990.

Almost immediately Moller Nielsen had the toughest test of his life, when the highly talented and hugely influential Laudrup brothers walked out after disputes about style and tactics. It was like Gazza and Platt snubbing England after the 1990 World Cup. A lesser man would have compromised, and subsequently crumbled.

Moller Nielsen did not. He persuaded the younger brother Brian back on board, and he proved one of the stars of '92 after Denmark's last-minute invitation to the finals when Yugoslavia were expelled.

Elder brother Michael missed the greatest triumph in Danish sporting history, but is captain again after making peace with a manager now fireproof after glorious success.

The value of a strong manager who knows his own mind and worth, and will not succumb to rebellious players, was vividly illustrated. But as the re-integration of the Laudrups shows, Moller Nielsen does not hold grudges. The common cause is too important for that.

The Danes just missed qualifying for the 1994 World Cup Finals in a tight group with Spain and the Republic of Ireland, but had little trouble reaching Euro 96 and the opportunity to defend their crown.

For Moller Nielsen it is the perfect stage on which to make his farewells to Denmark before relishing a new job as coach of another Scandinavian nation, Finland. His first match in charge was a 1-0 defeat at Wembley against England, and he would love the last game to be at the Twin Towers as well in the final of Euro 96.

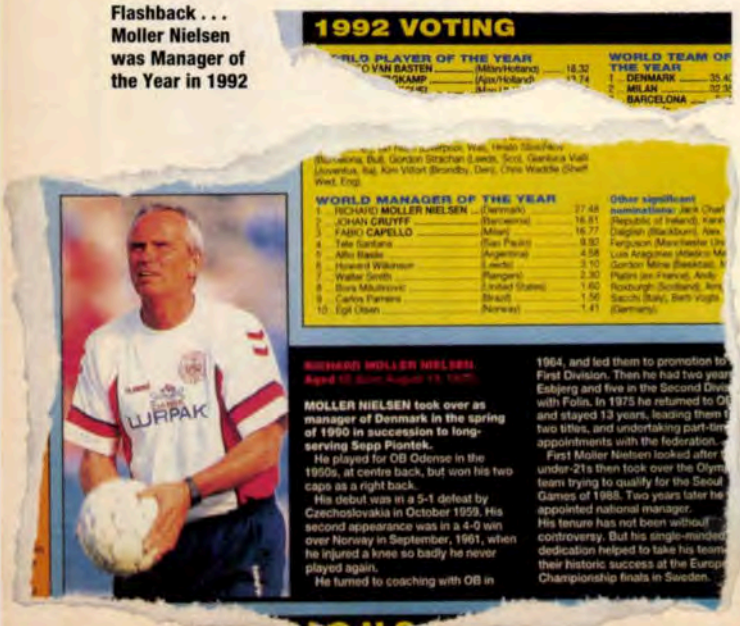
He had lucrative offers to work elsewhere after this summer's tournament. He could have picked up easy money in a number of Arab states. But, for him, they were not real jobs.

Bringing success to the Finns, who have never reached the finals of either the World Cup or the European Championships, would be a significant achievement to add to Denmark's glory.

That still would not bring him instant recognition in the too often insular football grounds of England – but would certainly add to the immense level of respect in which Richard Moller Nielsen is held all round the continent.

(Continued overleaf)

Flashback . . . Moller Nielsen was Manager of the Year in 1992



1992 VOTING

WORLD PLAYER OF THE YEAR

1	O VAN BASTEN	(Milan/Holland) 18.32
2	RKAMP	(Ajax/Holland) 14.74

WORLD TEAM OF THE YEAR

1	DENMARK	35.4
2	MILAN	32.3
3	BARCELONA	

WORLD MANAGER OF THE YEAR

1	RICHARD MOLLER NIELSEN	(Denmark)	27.48
2	JOHAN CRUYFF	(Barcelona)	16.81
3	FABIO CAPELLO	(Milan)	16.77
4	Tele Santana	(Sao Paulo)	9.30
5	Alfio Basile	(Argentina)	4.54
6	Howard Wilkinson	(Leeds)	3.10
7	Walter Smith	(Rangers)	2.30
8	Boris Milutinovic	(United States)	1.60
9	Carlos Parreira	(Brazil)	1.56
10	Egil Olsen	(Norway)	1.41

Other significant nominations: Jack Charlton (Republic of Ireland), Kenny Dalglish (Blackburn), Alex Ferguson (Manchester Utd), Luis Aragones (Atletico Madrid), Gordon Milne (Blackburn), Michel Platini (ex-France), Andy Roxburgh (Scotland), Arrigo Sacchi (Italy), Berti Vogts (Germany).

RICHARD MOLLER NIELSEN
Aged 40 (born August 13, 1935)

MOLLER NIELSEN took over as manager of Denmark in the spring of 1990 in succession to long-serving Sepp Piontek.

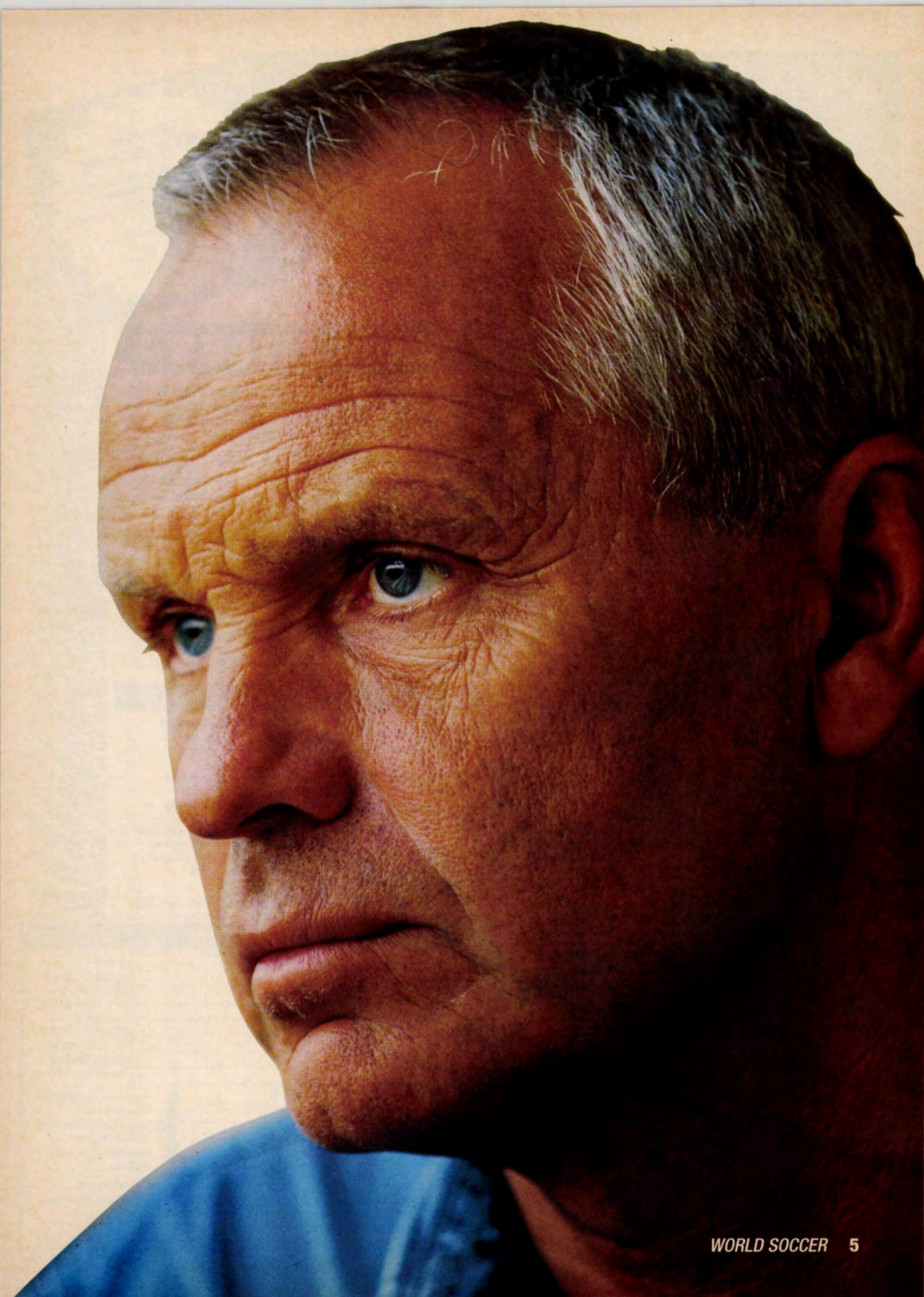
He played for OB Odense in the 1950s, at centre back, but won his two caps as a right back.

His debut was in a 5-1 defeat by Czechoslovakia in October 1959. His second appearance was in a 4-0 win over Norway in September, 1961, when he injured a knee so badly he never played again.

He turned to coaching with OB in 1964, and led them to promotion to the First Division. Then he had two years at Esbjerg and five in the Second Division with Polin. In 1975 he returned to OB and stayed 13 years, leading them to two titles, and undertaking part-time appointments with the federation.

First Moller Nielsen looked after the under-21s then took over the Olympic team trying to qualify for the Seoul Games of 1988. Two years later he was appointed national manager.

His tenure has not been without controversy. But his single-minded dedication helped to take his team to their historic success at the European Championship finals in Sweden.



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Moller Nielsen: Q & A

WORLD SOCCER: What are your memories of the 1992 European Championship triumph?
Moller Nielsen: I have many wonderful memories. The best moment in the whole tournament was the referee's final whistle when we became champions. It was really fantastic. During the whole championship we had superb support – we even had fair play from the Press.

Was it true that you stopped re-fitting your kitchen to lead Denmark to glory?
Yes. I like to do DIY and I had ordered a new kitchen, to be assembled from a kit. I was breaking down the old kitchen when the call came for Denmark to replace Yugoslavia. I was asked after the semi-final victory against Holland what my first thought was. I have to admit that what flashed through my mind was that I had another week's delay before starting work on that kitchen. That's the way it was. In the end I didn't have time – and craftsmen had to do it for me. But the kitchen became the most famous in Europe!

How did you start as a manager?
I was a player with OB Odense and the Danish national team, but suffered a serious knee injury, a snapped ligament. At that time they couldn't repair those things. I had to retire. But, luckily for me, Odense's Yugoslav coach became homesick and they asked me to take over in his place.

When did you become involved with Denmark?
That began in 1978, part-time, as manager of the Under-21 team. In 1979 Sepp Piontek started and we had a very good relationship. We thought about football in the same ways and helped each other. In 1985 the DBU employed me full-time as Piontek's assistant and I also ran the Olympic side. We qualified for the 1988 Olympics in Korea, but were deducted points for using an ineligible player, Per Frimann, and lost our place in the Games. It was a big sadness for me and the players. But it's history now. In 1990 I took over from Piontek as coach of the national team.

Did you learn a lot from Piontek?
We worked well together, learned from each other. We talked a lot of football, exchanged experiences, had a good time.

How has the Danish team developed since 1992?
It was necessary to change the players. Football teams are always changing. I compare small nations like Denmark, Sweden, Hungary, Switzerland, Holland with the sea. In the sea there are waves. Some years small countries have a wave of good players. Other years the sea is calm and you must accept that. For the big nations like England, Germany and Italy the waves are always crashing in. The Danish team now is good, as it was in 1992. Then we did not have the best players – but we had the best team. That was the key point. Johan Cruyff said there was nothing new about the football in the 1992 tournament. Arrigo Sacchi, though, said a new thing was there – the importance of team spirit, of team-building. I like to think Sacchi was right.

Do you have the same spirit now?
Of course we try to have that again. You also need a bit of luck to win a tournament. My experience is that the better you prepare your team, the luckier you get.

Can you repeat the success of 1992?
I am not even thinking about that, not a single thought. I use all my concentration on the next match. I have always done that. If you look too far ahead you can miss the steps. That's my philosophy.

Who are your favourites for Euro 96, apart from Denmark?
All 16 teams have a chance to win. Don't write anyone off. I see no real favourite, but the only country I can pick out with a better chance than anyone else is England. That is for three reasons. Number one: they have a lot of wonderful footballers. Two: they have won nothing since 1966, and their time must come soon. Three: last and most important, England are playing all their matches at home.

'All 16 teams have a chance. Don't write anyone off. The only country I can pick out with a better chance than anyone is England'

What about Denmark's 'Contra' counter-attacking style?
People say we play that way, but I don't think so. We try two ways of attacking. Sometimes when we have possession we keep the ball in our own half and then build up slowly. Other times we try to get the attack finished as quickly as possible, in as few moves as possible.

Do you think football today is better or worse than in the past?
The game is improving all the time. This year I have seen some wonderful matches, like Liverpool v Newcastle in the English Premiership for example. I see a lot of football around Europe and the world, and the game is faster and more skilful than when I played. It is really some show that football puts on now. I am looking forward to Euro 96, the wonderful stadiums. There is no place in the world like England to get the smell of football. The crowd and the atmosphere will be great.

What do you think of the recent law changes?
I don't like them much. Football is the most popular game in the world because it is such a simple game. I don't like people trying to make it more complicated. There have been few changes of rules through the years, and that is the way it should be. Maybe the pass-back rule was okay, a reasonably small alteration. But now there are ideas about bigger goals – and worse. I hate that. Let the players play, and let us all enjoy it.

Why are you leaving Denmark to coach Finland?
My contract expires on July 1, and I thought it was time for a change. I have been coach for six and a half years and that is enough in one job. I liken it to a party. You have great times at the best parties, but very often if you stay too long then people end up drunk. In the morning you wake up with a headache. Who needs that?

Why have you decided on Finland?
Initially, I thought I would leave any decision on my future until after Euro 96. But within a week of announcing I would finish with Denmark, the Finns came to me. It will be a great challenge. The players are very competitive, and there is a good quality of life in Finland. I am looking forward to working with players like Jari Litmanen of Ajax. But in football you cannot place too much on one man's shoulders. It is a collective effort. It is good to have really talented players, though.

Michael Laudrup missed the 1992 triumph after a dispute with you. Are those problems finished?
That is all history. Michael is a wonderful footballer, a player who can make a good team better. We work really well together now. I don't worry about the past.

What about Peter Schmeichel?
Every other country would like Peter as their goalkeeper. For me he is the best in the world. I have worked with him since his time as a youth player. He is so strong and so committed to winning matches. You can see it in his face. His spirit goes through the whole team – the spirit of wanting to win and giving the best you have. Peter hoped we would be playing our group matches at his club ground, Old Trafford, but we are happy with Hillsborough.

Finally, what about the Danish 'Roligan' fans?
Many thousands will come to Sheffield, and the Roligans are not coming only for the matches. They want to learn about the country. I think they will enjoy the English way of life as well as the English way of football. Many will come on big ships across the North Sea. But don't worry, England – they aren't coming like the Vikings!

Stockholm sensations . . . Moller Nielsen *(white T-shirt, below)* celebrates in 1992

Keir Radnedge

COMMENTARY

Meanwhile, back on Planet Earth

WELCOME to Euro 96. Welcome, all you 250,000 foreign visitors, to England. Welcome to the home of football, to the expanded and better-than-ever European Championship, welcome to a haven of peace where the Beautiful Game can blossom as never before.

And if you believe all that . . . you just haven't been living on the same planet as the rest of us.

Bobby Charlton summed it up admirably when he told me: "I want it all to go off peacefully and for the event to succeed. If England do well, that's icing on the cake."

English football, to consolidate the streamlining improvements of recent years, needs Euro 96 to be perceived as a success. That does not necessarily mean that England's own team must win, though coach Terry Venables will be expected by the tabloids to bring home the Henri Delaunay trophy. What it does mean is a perception that football brings a positive contribution to society in comparison with 10 short years ago when, in the wake of Heysel, it was seen as an ugly pariah.

Strange how fashions change.

Television has had much to do with that. Telling virtually the entire population, for hours, days, weeks and months on end, how wonderful is the English game is a subliminal blast designed to wear down even the toughest resistance.

The message is The Wonder of Football. Now, you and I know that. We also know, however, that football, like life, contains both the good and the bad, the beautiful and the dreadful, the happy and the horrid.

It's too much to hope that Euro 96 will reflect only the positive but if the overall balance is for the good then we should be happy. Three main areas matter: organisation, security and the football itself. In that order of ascending priority.

The workers – professional and volunteer – need to be up to the mark as they face public and press. You will hear the odd media squawk about cramped interview facilities or whatever. Forget it. The one problem which the entire Euro 96 organisation has had to face is that, with the best will in the world, English stadia sites do not possess the vacant space in which to develop all the usual tournament facilities for media, administrators, hospitality, etc.

'Hospitality', of course, is the dirty word which brought about the sudden downfall of FA commercial director Trevor Phillips while nevertheless protesting his innocence. In the wake of that fiasco over ticket distribution it is all the more important that director Glen Kirton's Euro 96 office (Euro 96 is a quasi-independent subsidiary of the FA) presents an efficient face to the world. After all, the substance of a possible bid to host the 2006 World Cup depends on it.

Security also matters, of course, when it comes to considering World Cup bids. No country has achieved greater success in controlling the hooligan menace than England. But then, few countries needed to go to such lengths to control a hooligan menace of the proportions which threatened to engulf the English game in the 1970s and 1980s.

Closed-circuit television, police infiltration and well-organised, high-profile stewarding has achieved wonders. But it has not eradicated hooliganism, only stifled its manifestations. That much has been evident from the handful of end-of-season outbursts. These are not peculiar to England; Germany, Holland, Italy and Belgium have all seen violent explosions in odd trouble spots at the domestic seasons' conclusions.

I fear not the likelihood of trouble in stadia but the likelihood of trouble outside. And not even in the vicinity of the grounds but right away, on the official and unofficial football fan campsites or in city centres – the places which are the most difficult to protect and police.

The England v Scotland match will be a security nightmare for the local police. It won't be easy for referee Pierluigi Pairetto, either, or for anyone who lives either side of a wavy line between the city centre and Wembley Park.

Survival is the name of the game both at this match in particular and the tournament in general.

So, what about the games? I do not expect great football but I expect a lot of good football; sophisticated both technically and tactically but, because of that, lacking perhaps in passion until we get to the knock-out stages where we may enter unknown territory (at this level of the game) with the so-called 'golden goal' (FIFA feels that 'sudden death' is too negative a term, so deeply must the international game bow to the gods of marketing).

I hope the referees are as strict as they were at USA 94; I hope the players and coaches try their best to win rather than not to lose; and I hope, above all and whether you attend the matches in person or via television, that you enjoy it.

Who's going to win?

GROUP A

ENGLAND: Never mind last year's scares against Japan and Sweden and defeat by Brazil. England at home in a major tournament are a very different prospect. Not that England have changed but because the opposition will be in awe at facing the hosts on their own patch and will START with the idea that a draw is a good result. On that basis England can not only qualify but top the group. Then the fun starts. But Terry Venables should make it to the semi-finals.

HOLLAND: Evaluation of the Dutch is awkward, considering that they squeezed in via a play-off yet, on the basis of their 2-0 thrashing of the Irish Republic, leaped to a position among the title favourites. If the Ajax players keep on ticking over then they can, indeed, win Euro 96. But any hint of dissent within the camp over tactics or team selection and the house of cards will come tumbling down.

SCOTLAND: Would probably stand a better chance of qualifying for the quarter-finals if they had NOT been drawn in England's group. Scotland, by general consensus, are not one of the most gifted of participants; it might be argued that they were better in 1992. The pressure their fans and media will exert on the team over the England game is likely to bend the players' own perspective and, indirectly, cost them the games against Holland and Switzerland.

SWITZERLAND: An unknown force. Will the late replacement of Roy Hodgson as coach by Artur Jorge prove a benefit or a bloomer? The Swiss federation is confident that the logistical and preparation mistakes made at USA 94 have been ironed out. But Jorge is new to this sort of tournament pressure and the absence of long-term mental cohesion with strong-willed players such as Ciri Sforza could prove fatal.

TO QUALIFY: 1 England, 2 Holland

GROUP B

BULGARIA: A dangerous test. Are Bulgaria still really as good as their fourth place at the last World Cup suggested? The potential appeared to remain when they played at Wembley last autumn and the return of Lubko Penev in attack is an important extra weapon in

No easy ride for Ruud

CHELSEA'S appointment of Ruud Gullit met with universal approval. But it's not going to be an easy ride from here on in to cups and championships.

Player-manager at top level is tough. Kenny Dalglish started out by sensationally winning the double on foundations laid by Joe Fagan but it soon started to unravel. The problem for Gullit will not be the playing but fitting into a game culture which demands that managers spend a great deal of their time dabbling, out of sight, in the transfer market.

That's not Gullit's natural habitat and, unless he gets the homework support he needs, it could all end in tears.

BY THE time you read this, we will know the outcome of the FIFA executive committee's deliberations on whether Japan or South Korea or the two together (the Stan Flashman Option) should host the 2002 World Cup. Whichever way it goes, the outcome

Hands-on experience . . . Terry Venables and Craig Brown with the Henri Delaunay trophy

their armoury. Everything may rest on their result in the opening match of the group against Spain.

FRANCE: More than 20 matches unbeaten is a worthy calling card for coach Aime Jacquet. But then, Michel Platini was manager for the previous record run before Euro 92 and France froze on the big occasion. They missed out on USA 94 and the consequent lack of tournament experience – more than the absence of their most outstanding natural footballer (Eric Cantona, of course) – could cost them dear and Jacquet his job.

ROMANIA: Nothing has changed from USA 94 except that the key men have all grown two years older. Gica Popescu has had a superb season with Barcelona – unlike Gheorghe Hagi, who is surely on his way. A few years back and Hagi would have been spurred to make amends. Now, at 31 and after nearly 15 years at the top, the spark may be dimmed. In that case, the entire Romanian cause will suffer because, for all their other talents, Hagi is the main man.

SPAIN: One of the few nations present at USA 94 to have palpably improved since then. Spain were just about the first country sure of a qualifying place. Their players are experienced and know everything there is to know about tournament football – how to ride the pressure, how to use the training time, how to win matches while keeping a little in reserve for the next game. Potential winners – if they have the legs. Spain's Achilles heel is the fact that their league campaign does not finish until the last weekend in May.

TO QUALIFY: 1 Spain, 2 Bulgaria

GROUP C

CZECH REPUBLIC: Making their first appearance in their new guise but it would be a sensation if they toppled any of the heavyweights. The Czech players, realistic as ever, may feel that their individual performances – with transfers in mind – may matter more than the team effort.

GERMANY: Berti Vogts is not bringing the most highly-talented German squad ever to grace a major event. But this is one of the best-balanced squads of the entire 16. Quality in the right areas is allied to basic endeavour – top it all off with Jurgen Klinsmann's strike rate and you have potential winners.

ITALY: The unknown force. Italy could just as easily win as crash out in ignominy in the first round. Their tactical supremacy is beyond doubt and man for man Italy offer probably the most talented squad in the finals. Whether coach Arrigo Sacchi can produce a team whose overall value even approaches the sum of the individuals is something else. As long as solid early performances rein in controversy over the absences of Baggio, Vialli and Signori then Italy can easily be looking towards the semi-finals.

RUSSIA: Tradition, from the Soviet soccer years, says that Russia freeze on the big occasion, yet their European Championship record is outstanding. An improvement on the strife-torn failure of USA 94 is likely but Germany and Italy probably possess one trick too many when it comes down to the art of nicking the vital goal.

TO QUALIFY: 1 Germany, 2 Italy

GROUP D

CROATIA: Will Croatia be to Euro 96 what Colombia were to USA 94 – the pre-tournament tip of whom too much was expected? Croatia have talent aplenty going forward: Boban and Suker could wind up in the notional 'teams of the tournament'. But they will be seriously stretched in defence once injuries and the recklessly-acquired suspensions start to bite. Their middle match against Denmark could be all-important.

DENMARK: This time the Danes will lack the element of surprise. The holders will, however, benefit from the presence of Michael Laudrup, who missed the 1992 triumph because of a squabble with coach Richard Moller Nielsen. Denmark possess a high degree of organisation and a great deal of class through the Laudrup brothers. That may not be quite enough to take them beyond the first round.

PORTUGAL: Long overdue back on the big stage, considering the conveyor belt of talent which began rolling at youth level in the late 1980s. Portugal boast a marvellous mixture of experience, ability and youthful ambition. Outside the traditional 'big names', they could be the most dangerous floater at Euro 96 – just as they were in England at the World Cup all of 30 years ago.

TURKEY: All four teams in this group must consider themselves in with a serious prospect of qualifying – even the Turks. But the old fears about travel problems, the difficulties in developing a 'tournament mentality' overnight and – not least – the difference in climate and lifestyle could all weigh them down. Fatih Terim's decision to quit for Galatasaray whatever happens, may prove expertly-judged.

TO QUALIFY: 1 Portugal, 2 Croatia

AND THEN . . .

The above scenario further suggests England to beat Bulgaria at Wembley, Spain to lose to Holland at Anfield, Germany to beat Croatia at Old Trafford and then Portugal – why not? – to beat Italy on the golden goal at Villa Park. In the semi-finals, Holland to beat Portugal at Old Trafford and Germany to beat England at Wembley (After all, as players and managers always tell us, everything evens itself out in the long run). Then it's Germany v Holland in the Final, with German experience just edging the difference.

must provide a fascinating pointer to how strong a grip over affairs Joao Havelange retains as he enters his 81st year (age, that is – not presidency).

RAY WILSON should no longer be considered as the sole culprit for West Germany's opening goal in the 1966 World Cup Final. Jack Charlton says so – and he should know.

Addressing a World Cup '66 reunion dinner, Charlton explained: "Ray headed the ball down to Haller all right. But if you look at the video – and I only saw it again recently, the first time I've ever watched it – you can see that I had the shot covered. Haller didn't hit it very hard. I could have stuck out a foot and deflected it wide. But I thought Gordon Banks had it covered so I didn't bother."

Charlton is not in work within the game any more after his Irish farewell but he'll never be out of work on the after-dinner circuit.

Not that some of the 600 diners may be in a rush to hear him and the rest of the Class of '66 back at the Five Lakes Country Club out in the wilds of Essex again considering the manner in which the local police had all the surrounding lanes sealed off by the time the dinner ended.

"What's the problem, officer?"

"Oh nothing, sir. Just checking traffic . . ."

Mmm.

THE OTHER Charlton, Bobby, has been busy around the menus of Euro 96, as well.

Not dinners, in his case, but lunches on behalf of MasterCard to honour an unsung hero of the local youth game in each of the tournament venues. Good to see grassroots not forgotten amid all the hype.

PITY about the FA Cup Final. I thought the first half promising but then Manchester United appeared to run out of legs.

In the second half both teams were so busy concentrating on not losing that nobody considered figuring out ways to win it. In such circumstances a mistake generally makes the difference – and that is what David James produced, chasing David Beckham's corner like David Gower following an away-swinger beyond the off stump.

Of course Eric Cantona needed a little luck to find the corridor through all those bodies in the penalty box but his Footballer of the Year award-winning displays this season had earned it.

What a hiding to nothing Aime Jacquet is on: if France flop at Euro 96 he'll go down in football history as the man who blew it by ignoring his finest player.

Not that Jacquet is alone in that gambling den. Arrigo Sacchi omitting Roberto Baggio and Javier Clemente travelling without Raul and Ivan de la Pena both fall into the same category.

Not that their decisions will have surprised *WORLD SOCCER* readers. We've dropped enough hints about Baggio . . . and as for Clemente, to the chagrin of our colleagues in the Spanish media, you read it here first in our April edition.

SECOND thoughts on the FA Cup Final . . . why do they shut the pedestrian ramp opposite Wembley Park Tube station, thus forcing not-the-most-pleasant-crowd-in-the-world into a bad-tempered jam going over the bridge? Ask a policeman, we're always told. I did. He said: "Haven't a clue, we're just following orders."

MORE from Wembley . . . by the time the Liverpool team went up to collect their runners-up medals the East End, which had deputised as Kop For A Day, was three-quarters empty. By the time Roy Evans's kids tottered back to the tunnel there were only the kids on the fence left to cheer them. So much for 'You'll Never Walk Alone'.

FINALLY (so to speak) . . . congratulations to Manchester United. Discussion may echo on about the comparative merits of this team compared with the Busby Babes of Munich and the Champions Cup-winning side of 1968. But to win the double twice is History with a capital H.

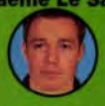
Libero

Missing the action

We're constantly being told that Europe's finest players will be parading their talents at Euro 96. But what about those who won't be there? Here's an all-star team of the injured, the overlooked and those unlucky to have been born in the wrong country, who we won't be seeing this summer.

Michel Preud'homme

Patrik Andersson **Franco Baresi** **Philippe Albert** **Graeme Le Saux**



Jari Litmanen **Dejan Savicevic** **Georgi Kinkladze**

Eric Cantona **Gianluca Vialli** **Roberto Baggio**

On the bench:
Ryan Giggs, David Ginola, Marc Overmars, Martin Dahlin, Raul Gonzalez, Georgios Donis, Meho Kodro, Predrag Mijatovic, Mlinko Pantic

End-of-season sales

A MAJOR FINALS tournament usually offers the players taking part a chance to put themselves in the shop window . . . and secure a big-money transfer. However, deals involving many potential stars of Euro 96 have already been done and dusted:

Enrico CHIESA (Ita) .....Sampdoria .....Parma
Aron WINTER (Hol).....Lazio .....Inter
Richard WITSCHGE (Hol)....Bordeaux.....Ajax
Edgar DAVIDS (Hol).....Ajax.....Milan
Michael REIZIGER (Hol).....Ajax.....Milan
Jocelyn ANGLOMA (Fra).....Torino.....Inter
Youri DJORKAEFF (Fra).....Bordeaux .....Inter
Zinedane ZIDANE (Fra).....Bordeaux .....Juventus
Laurent BLANC (Fra).....Auxerre .....Barcelona
Mario BASLER (Ger).....Werder Bremen .....Bayern
John COLLINS (Sco).....Celtic.....Monaco
Marco GRASSI (Swi).....Rennes.....Monaco
Jacob FRIIS-HANSEN (Den)...Bordeaux.....Hamburg
Ilian KYRIAKOV (Bul).....Anorthosis .....Aberdeen

IN FRANCE, where the domestic season restarts earlier than anywhere else, the Bordeaux side which reached the UEFA Cup Final in such dramatic fashion has all but been dismantled. The departures of Witschge, Djorkaeff, Zidane and Friis-Hansen are likely to be followed by those of French internationals Bixente Lizarazu and Christophe Dugarry. Another Frenchman likely to play in Euro 96, defender Lilian Thuram, looks like leaving Monaco for Parma.

Spanish international striker Juan Antonio Pizzi is set to leave Tenerife, although Real Madrid and Lazio are both laying claim to him. Also likely to be on the move in Spain is Luis Enrique, from Real Madrid to Barcelona.

Inter's signing of Winter and Djorkaeff may have scuppered the plans of Bayern's Swiss schemer Ciriaco Sforza to play in Italy for the time being, but two other internationals playing in Germany, the Czechs Pavel Kuka and Miroslav Kadlec, are likely to move on following Kaiserslautern's relegation.

Two Russians, Yuri Nikiforov and Ilia Tsimbalar, who were not part of Moscow Spartak's mid-season sale, are likely to be high on several managers' shopping lists.

Following in his father's footsteps

WE REPORTED last month on the possibility of father and son Arnor and Eidur-Smari Gudjohnsen playing together for Iceland against Estonia. Well, it did happen – but then again it didn't. In the friendly match in Talinn, Eidur-Smari went on as a 62nd-minute substitute – for Arnor. So they played for the same side in the same game, though not in the same team! "I just hope they play in the same team at the same time in Iceland's next match," said a spokesman for the Icelandic Football Association.

Fully booked for the tournament

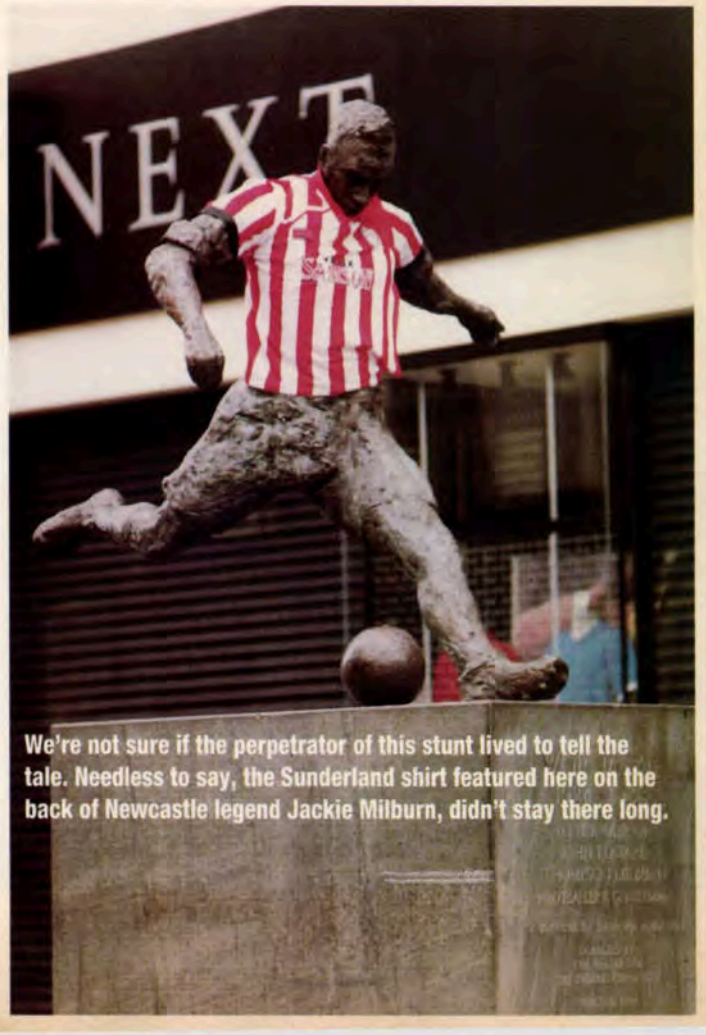
NO DOUBT about the burning football issue on the sports bookshelves: it's Euro 96. Certainly, *The Official Book* (Carlton, £7.99) has been riding high in the sports best-sellers. This follows the format of the similar Official Book of the last World Cup and contains 80 pages in an A4 format which cover the countries, the coaches, the stars and the history.

Editor of the book is *WORLD SOCCER*'s very own Keir Radnedge, who also provided the words for a more racy *Euro 96 Superstars* edition from the same publishers.

Two guides to Euro 96 have been produced in the normal 'paperback' A5 format. One is *Euro 96 – The Essential Guide to the European Championships* (Hodder Headline, £3.50) by Philip Evans, the doyen of international football event previewers. Also available is *Championship '96* by Glen Phillips and Tim Oldham (Boxtree, £3.99). Venues and history take up nearly half of the 200 pages with the other half being devoted to the countries and their qualifying tales.

The European Championship classic is probably John Robinson's *The European Football Championships* (Soccer Book Publishing, £11.95) which has been completely updated and revised. The history remains from previous versions but new purchasers will also find a full rundown of the Euro 96 qualifying competition plus detailed projected squad lists.

Finally (also from Headline, at £4.99) is *Statto's Euro 96 Guide* as dressed up (or down, as the case may be) by *BBC TV's Fantasy Football* character. Plenty of facts and figures to keep you interested through all those national anthems – including head to heads between the countries and match-by-match surveys of the top players' international careers.



We're not sure if the perpetrator of this stunt lived to tell the tale. Needless to say, the Sunderland shirt featured here on the back of Newcastle legend Jackie Milburn, didn't stay there long.

£OOTBALL £INANCIAL

Milan move in on Wall St

EURO 96 may be the biggest and most lucrative European Championship yet, but proof of the global appeal of European club football has been provided by Milan's attempt to be quoted on the New York stock exchange.

Italian clubs, currently non-profit stock companies, cannot be listed on domestic or foreign stock markets. However, the Italian parliament is expected to vote through a law which will change clubs' status and Milan are expected to take full advantage

In the mean time, Adriano Galliani, the man who runs Milan in owner Silvio Berlusconi's absence, said bonus payments to players totalling 10 billion lire (£4.2million) meant Milan will be in the red for the fiscal year ending June 30. He also disclosed that Milan hoped to receive 40 billion lire (£28m) next season as a result of participation in the Champions League.

The rain in Spain . . . Barcelona defender Sergi Sanjuan flies through a pool of Jordi Cruyff's tears to tackle Luis Miguel Urzaiz in the derby against Espanyol, which was wisely abandoned

Curl up and dye . . . Auxerre's players highlight their French League and Cup double with a team trip to the hairdressers

Chinese take-away, with French guys to go

Elsewhere in the transfer market, perhaps the most bizarre move has involved three French players: veteran Nimes international Christian Perez, Gueugnon forward Clement Garcia and Lille defender Jose Bray, who all joined Chinese champions Shanghai Shenhua.

Elsewhere, former England goalkeeper Chris Woods has moved to the United States, joining MLS outfit Colorado Rapids. Parma, after spending an eight-figure sum on Sampdoria striker Enrico Chiesa, took their spending yet higher with the purchase of French midfielder Daniel Bravo from Paris Saint-Germain.

Former Spanish midfielder Michel has bid a tearful farewell after 13 years at the Bernabeu, and is considering offers after turning down Atletico Madrid.

Grounds for caution

The authorities hoping for a peaceful Euro 96 would do well to take note of recent events on the Continent.

Fans will not be allowed to take a variety of items into Euro 96 venues, including flares, musical instruments, drums and flags with poles attached.

Snakes may not be on the list, but Sofia police recently reported that hooligans threw a live snake at the referee after CSKA Sofia's 1-0 win over Levski, which ended with a mass brawl in the players' tunnel.

In Turkey, players and coaches have appealed to fans to tone down their fanaticism, after a young fan committed suicide when his team, Trabzonspor, lost the title race to Fenerbahce.

In Portugal, meanwhile, a Sporting fan died at the Cup Final having been hit in the chest by a rocket.

Lip service

***"I'm very happy in this city. I want to win a lot: league, cups and much more"* – George Weah, after signing an extension to his contract with Milan.**

***"A team is like a nice clock. If just one piece is missing the clock is still beautiful, but doesn't work the same"* – new Chelsea player-manager Ruud Gullit keeps things ticking over at Stamford Bridge.**

***"We won't be able to hold our heads up high and call ourselves great until we have conquered Europe again"* – Manchester United director Bobby Charlton on his team's challenge next season.**

***"English clubs are limping between two thoughts. They will not turn completely to the European style, nor are they able to stay with their own style"* – Ajax coach Louis Van Gaal, after watching Manchester United and Liverpool in the English FA Cup Final.**

'We're wo
and we ca

Teddy Sheringham, the Tottenham forward who will play a crucial role linking midfield with attack for England at Euro 96, talks to Gerry Cox

WORLD SOCCER: The fact that the European Championships are being held in this country must put England back in the limelight, surely?
TEDDY SHERINGHAM: The team have to do well first – that's the main thing. People want to see games played in the world's best grounds and we are showing off magnificent stadiums like Wembley. But most of all, people want to see if we can play well when it counts.

Who do you think are the most dangerous teams?
Obviously, the Germans and the Italians are going to be up there, but you cannot rule anyone out. These days there is so little between anyone at this level. The Croatians fancy their chances as much as we do, and that's great for football – it's bound to make for a very entertaining tournament.

What do you think of England's chances?
Very good. When you are playing in a tournament like this, you must have outstanding players and I think we've got them in world-class stars such as David Seaman, Tony Adams, Paul Gascoigne and Alan Shearer. That is the backbone of the side. With players like that you have to be in with a real chance.

How important is Paul Gascoigne to England's plans now that he is fit and firing again?
It's excellent news. Gazza's has had his problems, but seems to be getting back to his best and perhaps the good times are round the corner for him. He thrives on confidence.

How is he with the other players?
He's a great character to have around. Footballers can get very withdrawn and not open up to a lot of people because of the criticism they face. But Gazza's nothing like that, and he's great to have around for team spirit.

Are you disappointed that you did not get to play with Gazza at Tottenham?
Yes, it was a great shame. But I've got the chance with England now.

There are a lot of prolific strikers in English football. Is it something of a paradox that England have struggled to score in the last year or so?
I really don't think it's a problem. Players such as Alan Shearer, Robbie Fowler and Les Ferdinand are proven scorers. It would be a problem if we were not creating chances, but that is not the case. We had five or six chances in the games against Bulgaria and Croatia, which is exceptional at this level. With the quality of strikers we have, I feel the goals will come.

Do you think Terry Venables knows his best side yet?
I'm sure he does. But then you have to allow for injuries, so he's probably got three or four sides to accommodate that.

Venables made the point that you have always been in good partnerships, right from the days of Tony Cascarino up to last year with Jurgen Klinsmann and now with Chris Armstrong. Do you find it easy to link up with other strikers?
I want to – that's the main thing. You go through different partnerships and learning processes in your career. It's a journey of experience.

How would you compare Jurgen with the other strikers you've played with?
He would have to be the tops because at international level you only get one chance, and when he gets one you expect him to bury it. He has proved it over the years and is still doing it, which shows the true class of the man. He's a wonderful striker.

You've worked with some of Britain's top managers. How would you compare them?
All the managers I've had in my career have been exactly right for me at the time when I've been with them. At Millwall, George Graham was very strict and always had a go at me. I thought he hated me, but when John Docherty came in and did the same thing, it made me sit up and take notice. After John moved on, Bruce Rioch came in and geared everything around me scoring as many goals as possible. Then I joined Brian Clough at Nottingham Forest. He was unique. You could talk football all day with him and he had his own way of working. He liked to play the game the simple way and always emphasised that. Just pass and move. He had success all along the way and you have to respect that.

Why did you leave Forest for Tottenham?
I grew up supporting Spurs so it was a great chance and a bigger stage for me. It was also a chance to work with Terry Venables, who is a great coach and excellent tactician.

What was it like being part of the Ardiles Famous Five attacking formation?
I enjoyed playing under Ossie a lot. It was a different experience and another idea of how the game should be played. When Ossie left, Gerry Francis came along and added the stability that Spurs needed.

What about at international level?
I'm playing under Terry again for England and I'm looking forward to working with Glenn Hoddle. He was my big hero when I was growing up. I would make sure I got to White Hart Lane an hour before kick-off just to watch him warming up. His ball skills were amazing.

How do you think he will do as England manager?
He is an excellent choice, and I can see him taking on the transformation in style that Terry has started. There is no doubt that we have made progress. You can't just go out and hustle teams. The continentals have learnt to play against that English style, so now we've had to try a different way and be more subtle. I am sure Glenn will add to that.

'We've got world-class stars such as David Seaman, Tony Adams, Paul Gascoigne and Alan Shearer. That's the backbone of the side. With players like that you have to be in with a real chance'

TEDDY SHERINGHAM
TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR & ENGLAND

Born: April 2, 1966.
International caps: 15. **International goals:** 2.

SEASON BY SEASON

1983-84	Millwall	7 apps	1 goal
1984-85	Millwall	-	-
1985-86	Millwall	18	4
1986-87	Millwall	42	13
1987-88	Millwall	43	22
1988-89	Millwall	33	11
1989-90	Millwall	31	9
1990-91	Millwall	46	33
1991-92	Nottingham Forest	39	13
1992-93	Nottingham Forest	3	1
	Tottenham Hotspur	38	21
1993-94	Tottenham Hotspur	19	14
1994-95	Tottenham Hotspur	42	18
1995-96	Tottenham Hotspur	42	16

rld class
n win'

'Glenn Hoddle was my big hero when I was growing up. I would make sure I got to White Hart Lane an hour before kick-off just to watch him warming up. He was amazing'

Early in your career, you went on loan to Sweden. Did that give you a different perspective?
It was certainly different to playing for Millwall's reserves! I was suddenly playing for big money and against much bigger players. It was a big boost for an 18-year-old. It was a great experience and I really enjoyed my time out there.

You are a different type of striker from, for example, Les Ferdinand or Alan Shearer. How would you describe yourself?
Obviously, my main aim is to score goals and I love doing that. But I've always enjoyed playing deep and helping the team out as a link man.

People are quick to have a go at the England team and the way they play. Do you think the criticism is justified?
Everybody has their opinion on what the team should be and who should be playing. That is their choice. But there is enough pressure on you when you are playing for England without all that. You worry about playing well because you know there are plenty of others waiting in the wings.

Is it hard to make the progression from the Premiership to the international game?
It's very different. That is why a lot of Premiership players do not make it as internationals. You need to have something a little bit different.

Three prize men

For Luis Figo, Gianfranco Zola and Jordi Cruyff, Euro 96 offers a chance to shine on the international stage

FIGO: Ace in the pack

AFTER A frustrating season at Barcelona, where he has been played out of position on the wing, midfielder Luis Figo, 23, could confirm his star billing at Euro 96. *JEFF KING* talks to the ace in a highly-fancied pack.

Some feel Portugal could be the surprise package at Euro 96. Can you really go all the way?
Luis Figo: With 16 teams in the finals, it's going to be the most competitive European Championships ever. In the past, there have always been notable absentees, but this time all the best teams will be present. That makes the competition even more difficult to win than a World Cup. So it's not feasible to talk about possible champions until after the group games. It's difficult enough just qualifying for the quarter-finals. Anything can happen in the knockout stage. Over 90 minutes, we fancy our chances against any team, any place.

So does the fact that Portugal are in probably the weakest group (with Croatia, Denmark and Turkey) give you a head start?
In theory, it's an easier group. In practice, I'm not so sure. All the nations had to qualify, so they must have something going for them. Turkey will have far more support than us. Denmark are the reigning champions and a lot of experts tip Croatia.

Are there similarities between Portugal and Croatia?
We're both sides with little or no experience at this level, yet fancied to do well. And we've both got great young players who are well-known for what they've done with their clubs . . .

This is the first time Portugal have gone into a major finals with the backbone of their side – Paulo Sousa, Rui Costa and yourself – playing abroad with top clubs. Will that make a difference?
It gives us confidence in our own ability and inspires the rest of the players. That's important because we haven't the psychological advantage of countries like Italy and Germany, whose track record alone inspires respect and even fear. Portugal have never won a major championship and haven't qualified for a major tournament since 1986. But now we have a team based on a generation of youngsters who are used to winning – the players who were Under-20 World champions in 1989 and 1991. That means that even though we are probably the youngest side in the tournament, we've been playing together longer than most of our rivals. We feel like winners and knowing each other so well is a big advantage. We're certainly got the foundations: we're going to England hoping and expecting to do well, but we're also looking on it as an opportunity to gain experience. We're working with one eye on the future. That means France in 1998.

'We feel like winners and we expect to do well'.

With Barça, Juve and Fiorentina all battling for honours, could Portugal's midfield trio pay for the efforts of such an intense season?
It's true that we've been under pressure, but the key players from every country have had equally hard seasons. Getting body and mind back in tune means finding the formula for recovering energies physically without winding down psychologically. We're based in Nottingham, which I'm told is a nice relaxed university town; that should help. Only Jorge Costa of the new generation is injured. We're clear about the system we have to play and we all respect the coach. Portugal are all about attacking and defending as a team.

There is still a feeling that you lack the quality striker who can make the difference. Do you?
I don't think it's a weakness, although I'd agree that Portugal football doesn't seem to produce out-and-out strikers any more. It's especially hard when the Benficas and Sporting Lisbons still tend to buy foreign forwards. Paulo Alves is the only player in the squad who is a traditional centre-forward. Domingos and Joao Pinto like to drop back into midfield, get involved in the build-up, and run at defences from deep. Still, I insist, Portugal's strength is that we attack in numbers.

So we didn't see the real Portugal against England at Wembley?
Not at all. You can't compare a friendly with a European Championship game. Basically, it was a useful exercise to get the feel of Wembley – a stadium we hope to be visiting again at the end of June.

ZOLA: Italy's Mr Modesty

GIANFRANCO ZOLA is the reason Roberto Baggio will be watching Euro 96 at home in Italy. The ponytailed superstar has been superceded in the national side by Zola, a late developer whose career has been spent largely in the shadow of others.

The diminutive Parma forward is the favourite son of national coach Arrigo Sacchi. His goals carried Italy through the qualifying rounds for Euro 96, after the Azzuri had crashed 2-1 to Croatia in Palermo early on in the campaign.

For Sacchi the system, a rigid 4-4-2 so successful for him at Milan, is everything. He has no room for prima donnas.

"I believe in the importance of having a total game," said Sacchi, announcing his squad for the finals. "To do that you need men who have that type of concept fixed in their minds. I haven't sought 'specialists' but 'total' players."

All of which is good news for Zola. Sacchi may not have picked the same team twice in 44 games in charge, but in Zola he has a player he can depend upon, a ball-jugggling genius with a range of technical skills as delightful as his competitiveness is tenacious.

For all the praise heaped on Juventus's Alessandro Del Piero, it is to Zola that Italy will look for goals in England. And it is Zola who will wear the number 10 shirt worn by Baggio in the USA.

"I hope there are no more surprises from Arrigo Sacchi," Zola told *WORLD SOCCER*, "because I've been in the starting line-up for a while.

"Baggio has had many problems with injuriesn. His performances have not been good this season. I would like to see Gianluca Vialli play in the national side. He has been good for every team he has played in.

"The important thing for me is that I'm in the team. My role is important, but so are all the players. I'm just another member of the side who hopes to do well."

Zola's modesty hides a burning ambition. From modest beginnings in Sardinia, Zola joined Napoli in 1989. It was in Naples that he came face to face with Diego Maradona. "I learned a lot from Maradona," says Zola, "but I don't like to admit that I learned from him! He is still the best player of all time.

"But we were only friends on the pitch. It was impossible to know that he was using drugs. Off the pitch, he had his life and I had mine."

Zola, 30 in July, emerged from the disgraced Argentinian's shadow in the 1991-92 season, earning his first national cap in Sacchi's first game in charge of Italy, a European qualifier against Norway.

At international level, his path had been blocked by Baggio, but Zola's career at club level has blossomed at Parma, whom he joined in 1993. It was no coincidence that Parma's fortunes dipped this season when Zola was injured in March.

Changes are afoot at Parma for next season with the departure of coach Nevio Scala and the arrival of the goalscoring sensation Enrico Chiesa, from Sampdoria.

So is the Parma success story set to run and run? "Parma can go on to further success because we are backed by a very important sponsor, Parmalat. As long as Parmalat sponsors Parma, the team will remain strong and they will still want to win the championship."

Zola has two years left on his contract with Parma, but would like to play outside of Italy. England, however, seems an unlikely destination, despite the English lessons he has been taking for the past year.

"I would like to have an experience of another country. It would be difficult for me to play in England, though, because I am short and there are so many high balls!

"The best young players in Europe will still choose to play in Italian football for some years yet. In England more money is being spent on transfer fees, but Serie A is still the most important league."

For the time being, though, the affable Sardinian's thoughts, are focused on Euro 96. "Italy have many good players who can win the tournament – Maldini, Del Piero, Zola! – but our most important quality is our teamwork. We work very hard and when a group of people work hard at something, they get results.

"The four stongest teams are England, Holland, Germany and Italy. They must be the favourites but every European Championship throws up a surprise and this time it will Croatia or Portugal. They are both very strong.

"The expectations of the Italian people are very high. They are waiting for a good result. It's only natural."

For Gianfranco Zola, Euro 96 offers a chance to shine on the international stage after the ignominy of his sending-off against Nigeria in the 1994 World Cup. "I am hoping to play at least 90 minutes at Euro 96 as I only played for 10 minutes in the USA!"

GAVIN HAMILTON

JORDI: Going his own way

JORDI CRUYFF has spent his formative years trying to persuade us that he is not father Johan's son.

He insisted that only his Christian name should appear on the team-sheet when he made his debut for Holland against Germany in April and Dad, who had travelled from Barcelona to Rotterdam for the fixture, announced afterwards: "He is not my son any more. He is an international in his own right."

But who is the kid kidding? Much as he may wish to avoid on-pitch comparisons with Superdad, he will have to admit that the surname has opened doors which other youngsters have to unlock for themselves.

He has launched his career under the protection of Johan, as Barcelona manager, and has to accept that, until he flies solo, there always will be barriers to objective judgments of his playing ability. It is almost impossible to ask "How good is Jordi?" and find an answer unclouded by Cruyff.

His long-awaited international debut was certainly nothing to write home about. But neither was the pitch, nor the overall team performance. Whereas most of the seeds sown in the Ajax nursery reach fruition at a precocious age, Jordi began there as a kid but is still an unknown quantity at 22.

He was born in Amsterdam on February 9, 1974, less than four months after his father's Spanish League debut for Barça. At the time naming himself after Catalunya's patron saint seemed patronising.

Cruyff Snr has been determined to mature him slowly. Even in 1993, he was predicting that Jordi would not be ready for regular first-team football until 1995. His career has been diligently choreographed.

As soon as Johan arrived as Barça manager, Jordi was inserted into the Under-19 team, where his airs and graces upset team-mates and put him on a collision course with coaches. Referees, too, reckoned Jordi was a damned sight too similar to his argumentative dad. At that stage, developing his personality seemed more important than developing his skills.

His 21 goals in 20 games earned him promotion to Barcelona B in 1992 and he made his first-team debut on March 30, 1993, in a Catalan tournament, but had to wait until September 4, 1994, for his League debut. He went on to make 29 appearances in the season, score nine goals and, until February, but it seemed that maybe his boots were not big enough for Barcelona.

He certainly had his father's quick mind, the drop of the shoulder and a frame so familiarly wiry that the doctors, in 1994, drew up a two-year programme to put some beef into his play.

Then, suddenly, someone threw a switch. Jordi, fielded wide on the left flank in place of the disgruntled Stoichkov, began to use his skills and changes of pace to rip holes in opposing defences.

Barcelona promptly opened negotiations to revise the contract which expires next June. However, his tearful response to the standing ovation he received when substituted in Barça's last home game of the season suggests he may be following Johan out of Nou Camp.

At least the decision to represent Holland has ended a will-he-won't-he story which had been bouncing around the sports pages since he was originally asked to play for the Dutch Under-21s in 1992.

The EU ruling had clarified his situation and leaves him, now, with the considerable task of clarifying our opinion of football's Number One Son.

GRAHAM TURNER

Flexible friends

England have the tactical know-how to win Euro 96, Don Howe tells Gavin Hamilton

YOU CAN take the player out of the Premiership, but can you take the Premiership out of the player? You should not have to, says England's assistant coach, Don Howe.

"The general standard of English Premier League football is the best in Europe," he says. "If anyone tells me it's not, I think I'll hang them!"

English clubs may have been outclassed and outpassed in European club competitions in recent seasons, but Howe believes the national side can cope with any tactical challenge thrown at them at Euro 96.

"We at last have a high level of tactical flexibility in English football," he says. "It used to be all 4-4-2. Now Liverpool play 3-6-1, Aston Villa play 3-4-3, while others play 3-5-2.

"There won't be a formation our lads haven't come up against. The Germans, for example, will play like Aston Villa. So we can say to the players that there's nothing to worry about because you've been playing against it every Saturday."

Flexibility is the new buzzword for Terry Venables and his coaching staff. The deployment of a three-man central defence for the Wembley friendlies against Croatia and Hungary gave Venables the chance to play five in midfield, six if you include the link role Teddy Sheringham played between midfield and attack. More players means more options, and strength in numbers in midfield, says Howe, is crucial to success.

"I always say to Terry that in international football it all goes on in midfield. Most countries now play five in midfield. Sometimes you get a 3-6-1 – a little like Liverpool play. Whatever happens, you have to get the numbers game right in midfield."

The danger for England, of course, is that Venables has changed too much, too soon. Howe doesn't think so: "Terry won't be asking players to do things they haven't been asked to do before."

Comparisons with the 1990 World Cup, when Bobby Robson switched from a zonal back four to a sweeper system after two games, are inevitable. "We did well then, don't get me wrong, but Bobby had trouble. It was all new to us.

"This time we have faced up to the tactical situtations. We are not going to have any problems."

So Venables has got the tactics. But do England have the players? "The European Championship will be won or lost on the individuals," says Howe. "Players who can pick up a ball and go past defenders. There isn't a tactical situation that can deal with that.

"At Liverpool, Steve McManaman is one player who can pick up the ball, run at defenders, beat them and create things."

Injuries may yet upset the applecart, though. Liverpool's Mark Wright, so important in the sweeper role at Italia 90, was the latest casualty, limping off against Hungary after 12 minutes. He will now miss the finals.

"All of a sudden our centre-backs are getting injured. But if everyone's fit, we've got a hell of a good chance, says Howe.

"All the best teams in Europe have qualified, which is nice. There will be no easy matches. At the World Cup you normally get one game which, with greatest respect to the likes of Egypt, you expect to win."

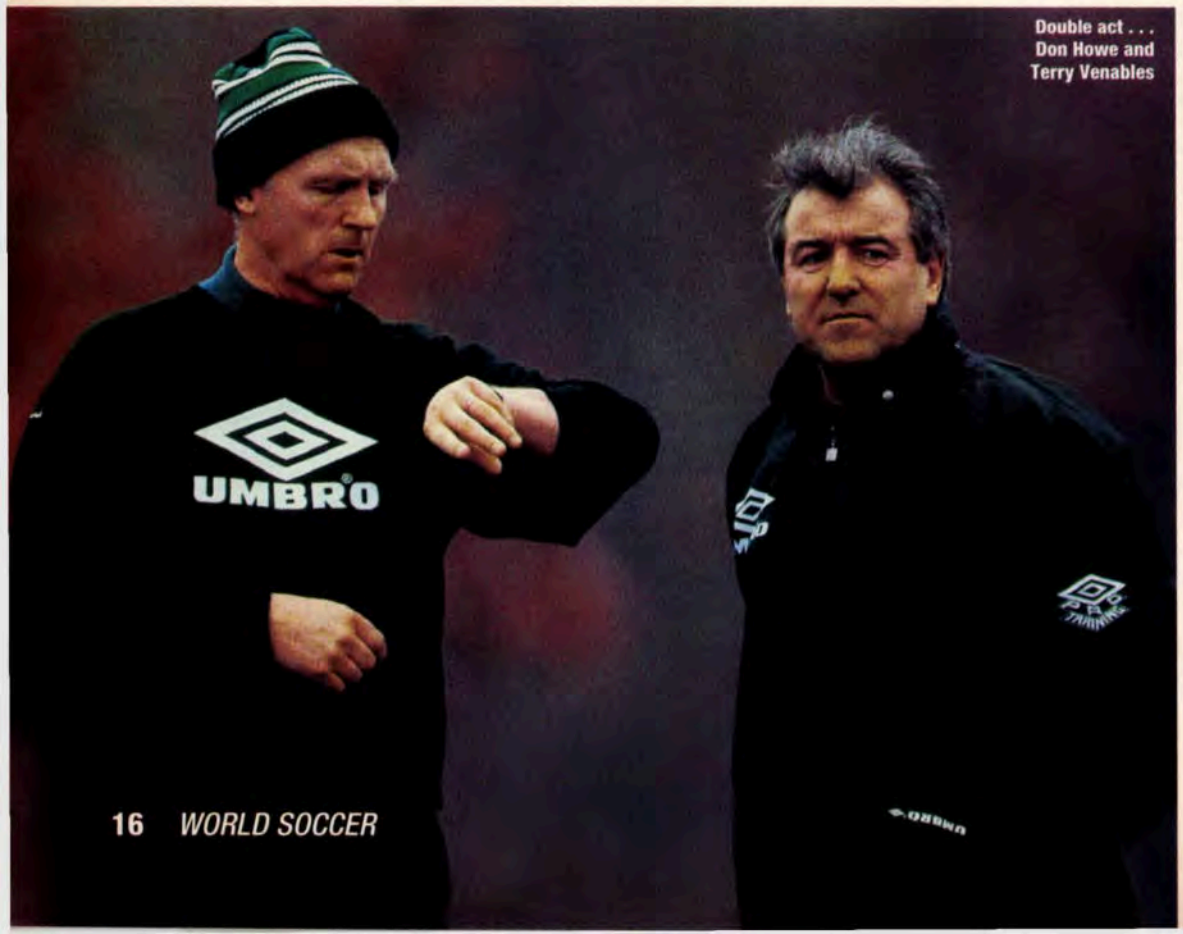
Howe is keen to stress the importance of planning for the future, and the 1998 World Cup in particular, even though Venables will not be in charge.

"We're all sorry to see Terry go. But it's the same old story: the king is dead, long live the king!

"Terry's done a great job and can say to Glenn Hoddle: 'You've got something to build on for the World Cup and I've given all these kids a chance for you.' "

Howe is not concerned by Hoddle's lack of experience. "Having been involved in the international set-up since 1979, I've always said that the only way to gain experience to become England manager is to be in the job. It's not a club job. It's an entirely different job."

'We're all sorry that Terry's going. But it's the same old story: The king is dead, long live the king!'



Double act . . . Don Howe and Terry Venables

Know the score

Stay in touch with all the latest news at Euro 96 with the BT Euro 96 *EasyReach* pager, a limited edition range produced especially for the 1996 European Championships. It will page you with all the important news from the tournament. Chelsea's new player-coach Ruud Gullit received his own pager at the recent IPC Football Awards. You too could own one. We have 10 to give away to the 10 readers who can answer the following question:

With with club did Ruud Gullit start his career in Holland?

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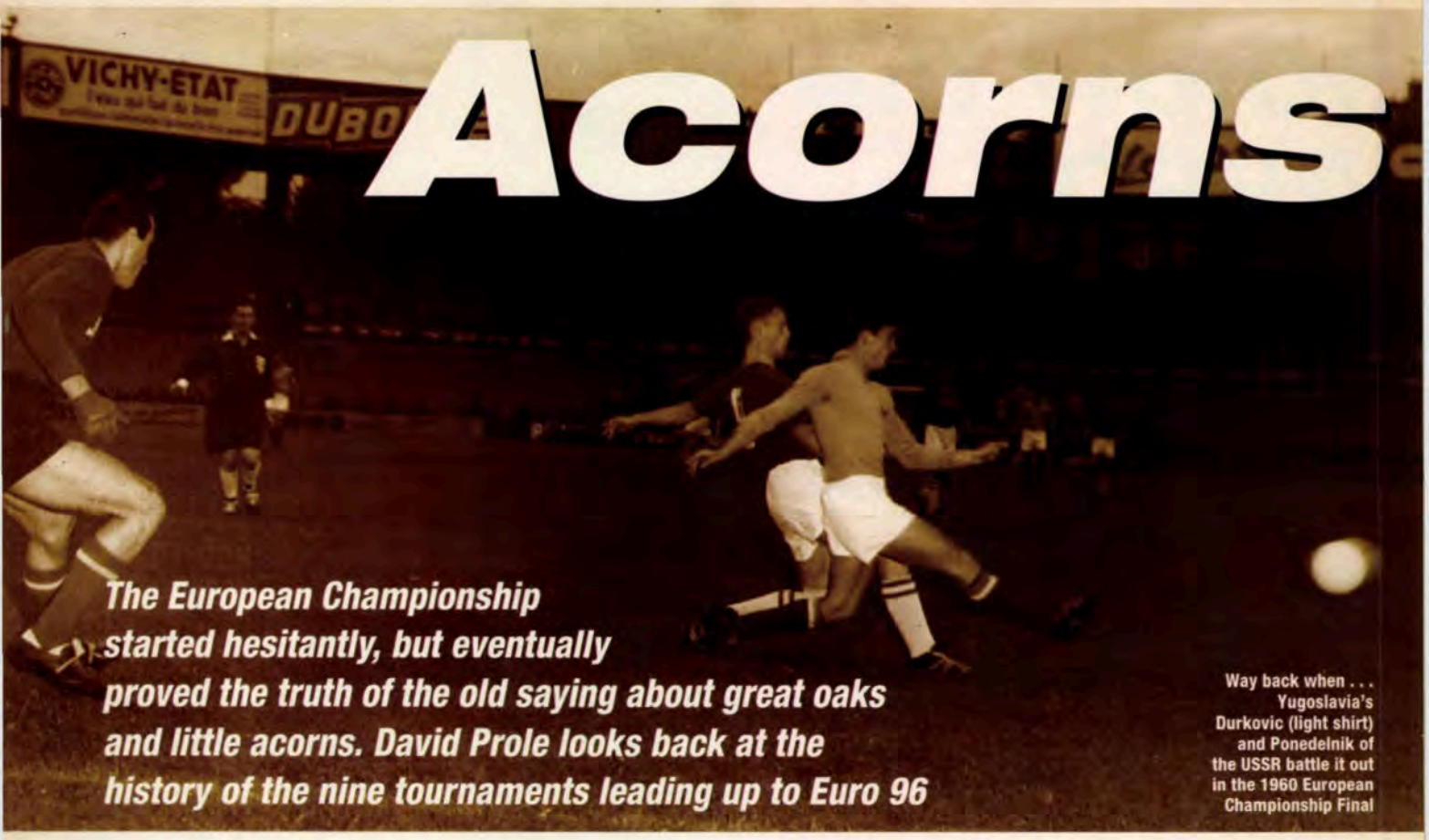

The European Championship started hesitantly, but eventually proved the truth of the old saying about great oaks and little acorns. David Prole looks back at the history of the nine tournaments leading up to Euro 96

Way back when . . . Yugoslavia's Durkovic (light shirt) and Ponedelnik of the USSR battle it out in the 1960 European Championship Final

1958-60 The European Championship crept rather than swept into the public consciousness. Henri Delaunay, secretary of UEFA and of the French Football Federation, devised the tournament – then named the European Nations Cup – but initial interest was less than half-hearted.

Only 17 nations took part in the first instalment. The British, still almost as insular as before despite several lessons from foreign teams such as Hungary, stayed out, as did Italy, Holland and West Germany.

A play-off was needed to eliminate one country and leave a convenient 16 to contest the tournament home and away up to and including the quarter-finals, with the semi-finals, third-place match and final all taking place in France.

The Republic of Ireland and Czechoslovakia were the 'odd' pairing but contrary to the record books they did NOT figure in the first game in the competition's history. Their first meeting, won 2-0 by the Republic in Dublin on April 5, 1959, was a full seven months after the Soviet Union had beaten Hungary 3-1.

The competition was such a ragbag in those days that Metreveli and his colleagues had to wait 364 days before playing the second leg, winning 1-0 in Budapest. Two games later the Soviets were champions, for General Franco pulled Spain out of the quarter-final on political grounds, and a 3-0 Soviet defeat of Czechoslovakia in the semi-final was followed by a 2-1 win over Yugoslavia in the Paris final.

Only around 18,000 turned up to see an in-off by Galic put the Slavs in front. Then Metreveli equalised, and Ponedelnik scored the winner in extra time.

The free-flowing French perhaps deserved a victory to set before home supporters, but after scoring 17 goals in four games they lost 5-4 to Yugoslavia in the semi-final and 2-0 to the Czechs in the third-place meeting.

1962-64 Scotland and West Germany remained aloof, but the second Nations Cup drew 29 entrants and deservedly was won by the hosts, Spain, inspired by Luis Suarez – recalled from Internazionale in Milan especially for the tournament – and Amancio Amaro.

The Spanish improved after almost going out to Northern Ireland in the second round, winning by the only goal in Belfast after a 1-1 draw at home. They then romped through against the Irish Republic, beat Hungary in the semi-final, and defeated the Soviets, the holders, before a downpour-defying crowd of 120,000 in the final, staged in Madrid.

The score was 1-1 after seven minutes and stayed that way for another 80, until Marcelino headed the winner.

The USSR had eliminated Italy, reduced to nine men by an injury and a sending-off in the first leg, and missing a penalty in the second.

England drew 1-1 at home to France and then, in Alf Ramsey's first match as manager, lost 5-2.

Luxembourg caused perhaps the biggest surprise in the competition's history by eliminating Holland over two legs and then taking Denmark to a play-off in the quarter-final. They eventually lost 3-3, 2-2, 1-0, with Ole Madsen scoring all six Danish goals, and his team went on to the semi-finals before losing to the Soviets, and then to Hungary in the game to decide third place.

1966-68 The Nations Cup now became the European Championship and was staged in Italy, with a new format of eight groups, played home and away, and the eight table-toppers going into the quarter-finals.

The British Championship was used a qualifying event and England, taking part for the first time and still with a nucleus of their World Cup winners, went through with a point to spare over Scotland despite losing to them at Wembley.

In the quarter-final they beat Spain twice, only to come off second best in a brutal semi-final with Yugoslavia in Florence. A late goal by Dzajic took the Slavs through, after Alan Mullery had become the first Englishman to be sent off in a full international.

Ivica Osim, the Slav playmaker, was so harshly treated that he could not play in the final. His colleagues might well have won if Italy had not scored from a late, disputed free-kick, but Yugoslavia were exhausted and overwhelmed in the replay, which Italy won 2-0.

England had minor consolation by winning the match for third place against the USSR, who had been spun out of the semi-final – literally – when Italy won the toss of a coin after a goalless draw. This method of resolving draws, popular at the time, was so obviously unfair that eventually the penalty shootout was widely adopted instead.

1970-72 The Soviets reached their third final in four attempts but lost 3-0 to a very strong West German team, who won seven and drew three of the 10 games they played over the competition's two-year span.

They took 10 points from six qualifying games, beat England 3-1 at Wembley and drew 0-0 at home in the quarter-final, scraped through 2-1 against Belgium, and then came good again in the final, winning 3-0.

The Germans, with Beckenbauer, Hoeness, Heynckes, Netzer and that superb finisher, Gerd Muller, were building up to the 1974 World Cup with a splendid combination of teamwork and individual skill. But Belgium, the hosts, made the most of their advantage and were well worth third place. If Van Moer had escaped unhurt from the quarter-final defeat of Italy, instead of having a leg broken, they might have done even better.

1974-76 This was perhaps the best of the nine tournaments to date, certainly in terms of the closing stages. The semi-finals, the third-place match and the final all went to extra time, and the final was decided on penalties.

Yet Czechoslovakia, the winners, had lost 3-0 at Wembley in their opening qualifying match – Don Revie's first as England manager – and looked nothing like qualifiers, let alone eventual winners. England, however, took only six more points and finished second to the Czechs in their qualifying group.

Wales topped their group with five wins out of six before going down to the host nation, Yugoslavia, in the quarter-final. Both Scotland and Italy finished third in their groups, Italy scoring only three goals.

In one semi-final, Yugoslavia led 2-0 with 20 minutes to go, only to be overhauled by the Germans, with Dieter Muller, sent on as a substitute and winning his first cap, scoring three times. In the other match, Holland had two men sent off and the Czechs emulated the Germans with two extra-time goals, winning 3-1.

Germany again came from two goals down in the final, Holzenbein heading a last-minute equaliser. But this time the opposition proved even more durable, and penalties were needed after extra time. The first seven were converted, then Hoeness shot over the bar and Panenka chipped under it to give the Czechs the trophy.

and oaks

1978-80 A change of format did little to help attacking football. Italy, the hosts, were allowed through to the final group without having to play, but the competition showed too much Italian-style defensive method. Seven group winners and Italy made up two final groups, with the two winners meeting.

Germany, under new coach Jupp Derwall, who had replaced Helmut Schoen, reached their third successive final and duly won again, although they were rather lucky to beat a splendid Belgian team. The Belgians were unbeaten in the qualifying contest, beating Scotland twice, with only five goals against, and in the group playoffs they drew with England – a match marred by hooliganism – drew with Italy and beat Spain.

The Germans did not score in their first two qualifying matches but hit 17 goals in the other four. They were so strong that they were sure of reaching the final after only two of their three group games, and were able to rest some players and coast through a goalless draw with Greece.

An early goal by Hrubesch put Germany in command in the final, but the Belgians battled on and were worth their equaliser, albeit from a disputed penalty. Then Hrubesch scored again, with only three minutes left, and this time Belgium could not come back.

England had qualified for a major tournament for the first time in a decade, dropping only one point in a group including Northern Ireland and the Republic. After the draw with Belgium, however, they lost to Italy and a 2-1 defeat of Spain was not enough to get them through.

Italy, harshly treated by their fans, did not even have the consolation of finishing third, losing to Czechoslovakia 9-8 on penalties after a 1-1 draw.

1982-84 France hosted the tournament and did not have to qualify, but Michel Platini still finished as top scorer with nine goals from five matches.

This tremendous feat (by a player generally reckoned to be a midfielder) was deservedly accompanied by a winner's medal, as France made the most of home advantage and followed Spain and Italy by becoming the third host nation to take the championship.

The qualifying stages included a freak result, when Spain – needing to beat Malta by 11 goals to go at the expense of Holland – won 12-1 after missing a penalty. The Dutch were left to regret their generosity of a few days earlier, when they let the Maltese off with a 5-0 defeat.

The competition was a disappointment for British teams. England lost Bobby Robson's first match as manager to a last-minute goal by Denmark, who also won the return at Wembley and went on to top the group with 13 points to England's 12.

Italy also failed to get through, winning only the last of their eight fixtures . . . against Cyprus.

Another change to the format meant that the top two teams from both the final groups went into semi-finals, which produced two great games. France, scoring twice in the last six minutes of extra time, beat Portugal 3-2, and Spain (who had eliminated Germany with a last-minute decider) won 5-4 on penalties against a Danish team without the inspirational Simonsen, who had broken a leg earlier in the competition.

The final was something of an anti-climax after the previous thrills. Platini scored early in the second half, with a free-kick that slipped through Arconada's fingers, and only four minutes remained when Le Roux was sent off. Spain pushed up for an equaliser, but left Bellone free to snatch a second goal.

1986-88 After Platini, Van Basten. He emerged as the man of the tournament while Holland swept through the qualifying stages, stumbled slightly in the final group, then brought off a notable victory.

The Dutch, like most good teams, cashed in on their luck. In the group game against the Republic of Ireland, for instance, they won when a freak header bounced in for the only goal. But they played splendidly in other matches, notably when beating Germany, the hosts, 2-1 in the semi-final. Earlier, Van Basten's hat-trick, on Peter Shilton's 100th appearance for his country, had been the first conceded by any England keeper since 1959.

England also lost to the Irish, who had eliminated Scotland in the qualifiers, and they completed the wrong sort of treble when being beaten by the Soviets. This was an enormous disappointment after they had dropped only one point in the qualifiers, scoring 19 goals to one in their six fixtures. The three successive defeats led to questions in the House of Commons.

Scotland finished fourth of five in their group, but won with a late goal in Bulgaria and so enabled manager Jack Charlton's Republic giant-killers to go through.

Under coach Rinus Michels, Holland's Total Football was too much for most opponents, but the Soviets – drawn largely from Dynamo Kiev – put up a good show in the final and might have done even better if Kuznetsov had avoided the suspension that kept him out of the match.

Gullit's header and Van Basten's remarkable volley down a fine angle would have beaten most keepers, but Belanov's penalty did not pass Van Breukelen, and the last chance of an upset disappeared.

England completed the wrong sort of treble when beaten by the Soviet Union in 1988 . . . the three defeats led to questions in the House of Commons

1990-92 Denmark came from nowhere to take the trophy after Yugoslavia had topped their qualifying group and then been forced to withdraw because of the civil war in their country.

The Danes had finished second with 13 points to 14, having lost at home to the Slavs and then winning away. They took more points than any other nation failing to gain top place, so they were deserving replacements, even if many people thought they would be going to neighbouring Sweden merely to make up the numbers.

Even when they got to the final, they were given little chance. But they turned the competition on its head by beating Germany 2-0 with goals from Jensen and Vilfort, who had returned to the team after going home in mid-contest to visit his sick daughter.

The Dutch, affected by one of their bouts of in-fighting, had done just enough to qualify, but came unstuck in the semi-final, losing on penalties to Denmark after a 2-2 draw.

Perhaps Germany were a touch too confident in the final, which they reached by beating Sweden 3-2 in the semi-final after losing their final group game 3-1 to Holland. On the night, though, they were second best to the exuberant Danes – as they had been during the qualifiers when they lost to an Ian Rush goal for Wales.

England and Scotland both got to the last eight from tight qualifying matches. Gary Lineker equalised 15 minutes from time in Poland for the point that kept the Republic of Ireland from a place, and Romania could only draw in Bulgaria, after leading and missing a penalty, to let Scotland through.

Lineker was to end the tournament, and his international career, a bit too early, being taken off by manager Graham Taylor as the final group game, against the Swedes, slipped away. If England had won, they would have been in the semi-final. They lost, and were last.

The Scots had no such chance to waste, having lost to Holland and Germany. But their fans, unlike England's earwigs (Ere we go, Ere we go), behaved extremely well.

Please God, let all followers of all nations do the same this time.

THE PREVIOUS FINALS

Paris, July 10, 1960
SOVIET UNION 2 (Metreveli, Ponedelnik)
YUGOSLAVIA 1 (Galic)
Att: 18.000.

Madrid, June 21, 1964
SPAIN 2 (Pereda, Marcelino)
SOVIET UNION 1 (Khusainov) Att: 105,000.

Rome, June 8, 1968
ITALY 1 (Domenghini)
YUGOSLAVIA 1 (Dzajic)
Att: 85,000.

Replay: Rome, June 10, 1968
ITALY 2 (Riva, Anastasi)
YUGOSLAVIA 0
Att: 85,000.

Brussels, June 18, 1972
WEST GERMANY 3 (G. Muller 2, Wimmer)
SOVIET UNION 0
Att: 65,000.

Belgrade, June 20, 1976
CZECHOSLOVAKIA 2 (Svehlik, Dobias)
WEST GERMANY 2 (D. Muller, Holzenbein)
AET (Czechoslovakia won 6-4 on pens).
Att: 45,000.

Rome, June 22, 1980
WEST GERMANY 2 (Hrubesch 2)
BELGIUM 1 (Vandereycken pen) Att: 48,000.

Paris, June 27, 1984
FRANCE 2 (Platini, Bellone)
SPAIN 0 Att: 47,000.

Munich, June 25, 1988
HOLLAND 2 (Gullit, Van Basten)
SOVIET UNION 0
Att: 72,000.

Stockholm, June 27, 1992
DENMARK 2 (Jensen, Vilfort)
GERMANY 0 Att: 37,000.

LEADING SCORERS

1958-60
Overall: 5 – Bubernik (Cze), Fontaine (Fra), Vincent (Fra)
Finals: 2 – Galic (Yug), Heutte (Fra), Ivanov (Sov), Jerkovic (Yug), Ponedelnik (Sov).

1962-64
Overall: 11 – Madsen (Den)
Finals: 2 – Bene (Hun), Novak (Hun), Pereda (Spa)

1966-68
Overall: 7 – Riva (Ita)
Finals: 2 – Dzajic (Yug)

1970-72
Overall: 11 – G. Muller (W Ger)
Finals: 4 – G. Muller W Ger)

1974-76
Overall: 8 – Givens (Ire)
Finals: 4 – D. Muller (W Ger)

1978-80
Overall: 7 – Keegan (Eng)
Finals: 3 – K. Allofs (W Ger)

1982-84
Overall: 9 – Platini (Fra)
Finals: 9 – Platini (Fra)

1986-88
Overall: 7 – Claesen (Bel), Van Basten (Hol), Altobelli (Ita)
Finals: 6 – Van Basten (Hol)

1990-92
Overall: 10 – Pancev (Yug), Papin (Fra)
Finals: 3 – Bergkamp (Hol), Brolin (Swe), Riedle (Ger)

Welcome to the

Simon Inglis profiles the eight European Championship venues which, despite

Uncertain future . . . the days of Wembley being the national stadium could be numbered

IF YOU'RE a Florentine who likes a bit of flare with your football or a Dortmunder with a drum, Euro 96 may not be the place to get too excited.

England's post-Hillsborough football grounds are now amongst the best in Europe – an astonishing turnaround since the dark days of the 1980s – but they are also possibly the most sanitised outside North America and Japan.

'Football Comes Home' is the Football Association's slogan for the tournament. But the homes of English football have changed so radically that according to some terrace die-hards 'Welcome to the nanny state' might be a more appropriate message.

Many of the expected 250,000 visiting fans will already have received polite leaflets from the FA, entitled: 'Some useful tips on how to enjoy the tournament'. Visitors are reminded that large flags, flares, air-horns and even musical instruments will be banned. Moreover, unlike the 1994 World Cup, no lockers will be provided outside the venues to store confiscated items.

Other areas of culture shock in store for visiting fans include the seating arrangements. Unlike in many a continental stadium, fans will be told to take up the exact seat marked on their tickets. Similarly,

VILLA PARK

Aston Villa's famous red-brick ground celebrates its centenary next season, but only the ornate Trinity Road Stand survives from bygone years. The new Holte End exterior mimics the style of the old stand but inside is a two-tier structure holding 13,526, the largest end stand in British football. Also new is the two-tier Doug Ellis Stand, named after Villa's chairman. The overall effect is a hugely improved ground, but still built along typically British piecemeal lines. Bags of character but precious little planning. *WORLD SOCCER recommends:* the chips and the McGregor Suite, named after the Football League's founder, a Villa stalwart of the 1880s.

1996 capacity: 39,341 all-seated *
Record gate: 76,588 v Derby, March 14, 1946
Opened: 1897
Post-Taylor costs: £18.5million

ANFIELD

The Kop is dead! Long live the new Kop! It may not have quite the mystique of the famous old mound, but, uniquely in Europe, it does have a branch of McDonald's at the rear. The stand's acoustics are still pretty intimidating, too. But the real coup for Liverpool is that, whereas in 1966 nearby Goodison Park got the nod, Anfield is now the best ground on Merseyside. It's not beautiful, not big enough for Liverpool's following, but fully modernised on two sides and still the only ground in the Premiership not to have a scoreboard (the Kop keep count instead). *WORLD SOCCER recommends:* the memorial to Hillsborough victims and the adjacent Shankly Gates – both genuinely moving.

1996 capacity: 41,210 all-seated *
Record gate: 61,905 v Wolves, Feb 2, 1952
Opened: 1884 (for Everton)
Post-Taylor costs: £18.7million

ELLAND ROAD

Most of Elland Road was revamped during the Revie era at Leeds. But the 17,000 seat East Stand, opened by Lord Justice Taylor in 1993, towers above its predecessors, under what was the largest cantilevered roof in the world (51m in depth), until Manchester United opened their new North Stand recently. Elland Road has a rather clinical, cold demeanour at times, but the location – plenty of space, good road connections and a potential rail link – oozes with potential. The recent row over who should pay for new dressing rooms for Euro 96 suggests that relations between United and their Council landlords are still testy. Fans from outside Leeds also continue to find the Elland Road atmosphere intimidating, even when England played Sweden there last year. *WORLD SOCCER recommends:* the East Stand lower concourse, which is like a cavernous shopping mall.

1996 capacity: 39,775 all-seated *
Record gate: 59,892 v Sunderland, March 15, 1967
Opened: for rugby, 1878; for football, 1898
Post-Taylor costs: £10.3million

OLD TRAFFORD

The ground they call the 'theatre of dreams' now resembles a vast football warehouse. Manchester United finished their 30-year masterplan for Old Trafford in 1993, then two years later started a new one! The result, like Elland Road, is a lop-sided ground with one huge stand towering above its neighbours. But the new £17.6million North Stand – which has raised the capacity from 44,594 to 55,800 – looks disappointingly utilitarian and has limited leg-room (although its 58m-span roof is the largest cantilevered structure in the world). If the design were carried around all four sides it could accommodate over 75,000, which should do the PLC's share price a world of good. A statue of Sir Matt Busby by the Munich memorial is a reminder of when United were only a mere football club. *WORLD SOCCER recommends:* the United Megastore has to be seen to be believed. Its turnover alone outstrips that of some Premier League clubs.

1996 capacity: 55,800 all-seated *
Record gate: 76,962 Wolves v Grimsby, March 25, 1939
Opened: 1910
Post-Taylor costs: £43.5million

nanny state . . .

their recent sanitisation, indicate that England has genuine quality in depth

whereas in the likes of Spain and Italy, stadium seats are generally backless units bolted directly onto concrete (thus making them easy to stand on or jump across), in England the standard seat is a tip-up – almost impossible to stand on and lethal for one's shins in the midst of a manic goal celebration.

Apart from the usual pre-tournament anxieties about breaches of segregation (caused by black market ticket dealings), the greatest concern inside the venues is the perceived ease with which fans can get onto the pitch. Continental supporters accustomed to an array of moats, fences and screens may regard the lack of perimeter barriers at Euro 96 as too tantalising an invitation to resist.

Again, the organisers hope to convey the message that in England 'crowd safety is a shared responsibility'. Watching games without fences is a 'privilege'.

If all goes well with this approach, the French may be tempted to follow suit for the 1998 World Cup. But if pitch invasions occur, FIFA and UEFA will almost certainly display their former caution (even possibly towards English clubs staging European matches).

Staging Euro 96 will cost the FA £16million, but unlike most host nations preparing for such a tournament, very little has had to be spent on upgrading the venues. The £72million already spent at the eight venues since 1990 has been to meet the demands of the post-Hillsborough Taylor Report rather than those of Euro 96. Without the Taylor Report and some £20million of Football Trust grants (channelled from the pools companies and the government), it is generally acknowledged that England would not have stood a chance of hosting the tournament.

'The range of facilities compares favourably with the best US venues'

Instead, only seven years after the Sheffield disaster, England can justly claim to have more modernised stadiums than any other member of UEFA, and operate a system of crowd management which is now being widely studied by other nations. Apart from the removal of all perimeter fences, stewards have increasingly replaced police, and the range of facilities now available to ordinary fans compares favourably with the best US venues.

England may still not have large-scale architectural showpieces to match the San Siro or Munich, but seat for seat it now boasts far more quality in depth than its continental counterparts, a point recently acknowledged by the chairman of UEFA's Stadium Committee, Ernie Walker. Quite an admission, at least for a Scotsman!

● A new edition of *The Football Grounds of Britain*, by Simon Inglis, is now available, priced £14.99.

ST JAMES' PARK

Since the property magnate Sir John Hall took over Newcastle in 1992, St James' Park has been transformed from an under-developed ground into one of the most stylish superbowls in European football. Newcastle missed out in 1966 because the local council, who own the ground, raised too many objections. Now St James' is the city's pride and joy. Outside, the styling is a chic blend of pastel-shaded steel and concrete. Inside is understated cool. Very Zen. But, alas, for Sir John and King Kevin, the new St James' is far too small to accommodate the Toon Army. With no room to expand, St James' might prove to be state-of-the-art obsolescence. Or football's most exclusive private club.

WORLD SOCCER recommends: the concourse at both ends are more like art galleries than stadiums; the club shop is like a chic boutique. Manchester United might have won the League, but the Magpies win on style by a mile.

1996 capacity: 36,610 all-seated *
Record gate: 68,386 v Chelsea, Sept 3, 1930
Opened: 1880
Post-Taylor costs: £23.5million

HILLSBOROUGH

It is hard to think of Hillsborough without the tag 'disaster'. But rather than Sheffield Wednesday dealing openly with the issue, both local memorials to the events of 15 April 1989 are beyond the boundaries of the ground, in nearby Hillsborough Park and the local shopping area. Hillsborough, the ground, has been modernised since 1989, but only by adapting and extending two stands and converting another, the Kop, to seating. In particular, the original 1914 gable has been lovingly replicated on the vast new South Stand roof. The Leppings Lane End terracing, where the deaths occurred, is now seated, but covered by a clumsy roof extension. A major tournament without Hillsborough seems inconceivable. But in terms of spectator facilities this is the least advanced of the club venues.

WORLD SOCCER recommends: the 1961 North Stand; still the ground's most modern-looking structure.

1996 capacity: 39,800 all-seated *
Record gate: 72,841 v Man City, Feb 17, 1934
Opened: 1899
Post-Taylor costs: £10million

CITY GROUND

Even though the Trent Bridge cricket ground next door is a regular Test venue, Nottingham hasn't seen a full international football match since 1909. Forest's much improved ground was a surprise choice for Euro 96. Two new end stands flank the older pair, with the Bridgford End Stand dipping unnervingly in one corner so that the houses behind do not lose all their daylight. The Trent End Stand has a rather curvaceous river frontage, facing near-neighbours Notts County. Scare stories in the press would have locals believe that the visiting Turkish supporters – "The Fans from Hell" – offer the biggest threat to peace since the Sheriff of Nottingham. But at least the River Trent will remind them of the Bosphorus.

WORLD SOCCER recommends: the Pitch Sports Diner in the Trent End; an American-style bar where Euro 96 will be broadcast on 100 TV monitors.

1996 capacity: 30,602 all-seated *
Record gate: 49,946 v Man Utd, Oct 28, 1967
Opened: 1898
Post-Taylor costs: £10.1million

WEMBLEY

Now that most major club grounds have been modernised, poor old Wembley's inadequacies have become ever more apparent. Despite around £40million-worth of patching-up during the past decade, the stadium is an increasing embarrassment. Later this year its fate will be decided. Either it will be rebuilt with Lottery money, or the Sports Council will instead award the Lottery dosh to Manchester. In the meantime, around 3,000 of the worst seats will be roped off for Euro 96. There would have been more lost had the stadium not found a way of angling the taller, UEFA-approved advertising hoardings. But Wembley is used to making do. It is, after all, the most famous greyhound stadium and rock venue in the world.

WORLD SOCCER recommends: strong bladders, waterproof shoes and a long neck for those in the cheap seats. Beware also of lumps in the throat. This place gets to you in the end, especially when the marching bands troop on.

1996 capacity: 79,045 all-seated *
Record gate: 126,047 Bolton v West Ham, April 28, 1923
Opened: at the above match

* In most cases, actual capacities for Euro 96 fall a few hundred seats below the stated figure. This is because tournament media facilities take up more space and because in certain stands front rows have been taken out of use owing to UEFA's commercial agreement to display larger advertising hoardings. Overall, it has been estimated that up to 5,000 seats will be cordoned off at the eight venues because of the 900mm high boards (compared with the UK standard of 700mm).

Only time will Tel

John Kelly on the hopes of the improving hosts

SIXTEEN nations take part at Euro 96, and of those England are by far the most difficult to gauge. They have not played a competitive international since November 1993 yet many now feel they are capable of taking the trophy.

The 3-0 victory over a poor Hungarian side in the last Wembley build-up match ended England's recent goal drought (five goals in six previous games this season), and marked a welcome return for Darren Anderton, the Tottenham forward who missed seven months with a groin problem.

Coach Terry Venables has been criticised in the past for continually tinkering with his line-up (he has used 45 players), but he now has a fair idea of the team he'd like to field in the first match, against the Swiss. The problem is, injuries may force him to change his hand.

Injury problems have emerged at just the wrong time. Mark Wright damaged knee ligaments in the Hungary friendly and joined the list of crocked central defenders that includes first-choice pair Tony Adams and Gary Pallister.

'Many now feel that Venables has got the balance right'

Poor Wright – injury has kept him out of one World Cup and now a second Euro event. Steve Howey is fit again, but lacking match practice. The alternatives are Aston Villa's Gareth Southgate and Ugo Ehiogu.

Southgate went on for Wright at Wembley and did an excellent job in a radical three-man defence, with Stuart Pearce and Gary Neville alongside him, while Ehiogu had an outstanding season.

Gary Neville looks to have made the right-back slot his own, 19 months after making his full debut for Manchester United, and Nottingham Forest veteran Stuart Pearce's dedication and awesome competitive streak have beaten off all recent attempts to dislodge him from the left-back position.

Arsenal's David Seaman will start in goal, while Blackburn's Tim Flowers is under pressure for the reserve position from Tottenham's Ian Walker, who gained experience against Hungary.

In midfield, England have almost an embarrassment of riches, and if Venables is forced by injuries to play only three at the back, England could well use a five-man midfield of Paul Ince, Paul Gascoigne, David Platt, Darren Anderton and Steve McManaman or Jason Wilcox. Ince, back to his best after a shaky start in Italy, is a true leader of men, and his bite and drive in the middle of the park will be vital. Add to that the new-found vision he displayed in setting up Platt for the second goal against the Hungarians, and you have a player many countries would do well to watch.

Platt and Gascoigne have made themselves automatic selections, while Anderton's return from injury could hardly have come at a better time. Two goals against Hungary took his total to five in 10 games, a fine return for a player who is there ostensibly to create chances. Steve Stone, who ably deputised during Anderton's absence, might feel a little aggrieved at being left out, but Venables is a great believer in using a core of players from the same club, and Tottenham is undoubtedly his preferred choice.

On the left-hand side of midfield, McManaman now faces a threat from Wilcox, who played only 723 minutes for Blackburn this season. He took McManaman's place for the Hungary match, and made the most of his debut opportunity. While McManaman tends to cut inside whenever possible, which makes his game slightly predictable, Wilcox is more of an out-and-out winger, and his delivery for Ferdinand and Sheringham was first class. Either player will do a good job for England, with McManaman the slight favourite to start by virtue of his dazzling displays for Liverpool this season, displays which he has largely failed to reproduce in an England shirt.

Up front, Alan Shearer, just returning from a hernia operation, will start alongside Sheringham, who has improved beyond measure as an international in the past 18 months. Shearer will spearhead the attack, even though he has not scored for England since September 1994, with Sheringham acting as the link man to the midfield. Sheringham likes to drop back to collect the ball, and his passing and vision make him the ideal foil for Shearer's more direct approach.

That leaves Newcastle's Les Ferdinand and Peter Beardsley, Liverpool's Robbie Fowler and Middlesbrough's Nick Barmby waiting in the wings. Ferdinand would be the obvious choice to replace Sheringham, and many continental sides would have difficulty coping with Ferdinand's height and power. Fowler could also figure, especially if Shearer does not produce the goods. Barmby, who lost form during the second half of the season, and Beardsley seem destined to miss out – injuries to other players could be their only hope.

It is difficult to judge how good this England side is, but many now feel Venables has just about got the balance right and that England are justified in being ranked one of the favourites. England have certainly improved since the disastrous World Cup campaign in 1993. How much have they improved? Only time, and this summer's finals, will tell.

STAR MAN
Paul Gascoigne

PAUL GASCOIGNE'S career has come full circle since he joined Rangers last summer. He scored a hat-trick as the Gers clinched the Scottish League title, was voted Scotland's Footballer of the Year, and then inspired Rangers to victory in the Scottish Cup Final, five years to the day after the FA Cup Final against Nottingham Forest that almost ended his career.

In between, Gazza has had 14 operations to fix his busted knee and a less-than-successful period in Italy with Lazio. The pace which made him such a threat earlier in his career has gone, but he still possesses enough skill to make him England's big hope.

The move to Rangers has been a runaway success and has seen him return to the sort of form which swept England to the semi-finals of Italia 90.

His recent England performances have been solid but unspectacular, though he has become more of a commanding figure in midfield. Venables has kept faith throughout, and could now be rewarded with a few vintage Gascoigne performances this summer.

PLAYER TO WATCH: David Platt

DAVID PLATT'S goal against Hungary at Wembley was the 200th of his career, his 27th for England from 58 appearances, and almost certainly guarantees him the England captaincy for Euro 96.

His critics argue he is no longer a driving force in midfield. But while he continues to figure on the scoresheet, England simply cannot ignore him.

At 29, Platt may not be able to perform the box-to-box function which made such an impact at Italia 90, but he still commands respect as one of the few players in the England side with significant Continental experience. His performances for Arsenal last term were admittedly below par, but he still managed to score six times, despite a nagging knee injury.

Having started his career by being booted out of Old Trafford, he moved to Crewe and then Aston Villa. England turned him into a star, and a string of big-money moves turned him into the world's most expensive footballer.

His spell in Italy, with Bari, Juventus and Sampdoria, yielded little silverware, but added technical know-how to his game which will be vital this summer.

With Paul Ince alongside to do the serious grafting, Platt will be free to join the attack, where he is often at his most dangerous. It is Platt's goals which have made him such an important member of the England side, and a worthy captain as well.

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
TIM FLOWERS *Blackburn* 29 yrs
DAVID SEAMAN *Arsenal* 32 yrs
IAN WALKER *Tottenham* 24 yrs
DEFENDERS
TONY ADAMS *Arsenal* 29 yrs
UGO EHIOGU *Aston Villa* 23 yrs
STEVE HOWEY *Newcastle* 24 yrs
GARY NEVILLE *Man Utd* 21 yrs
PHIL NEVILLE *Man Utd* 19 yrs
STUART PEARCE *Nottm Forest* 34 yrs
GARETH SOUTHGATE *Aston Villa* 25 yrs
MIDFIELDERS
DARREN ANDERTON *Tottenham* 24 yrs
PAUL GASCOIGNE *Rangers (Sco)* 29 yrs
PAUL INCE *Internazionale (Ita)* 29 yrs
ROBERT LEE *Newcastle* 30 yrs
STEVE MCMANAMAN *Liverpool* 24 yrs
DAVID PLATT *Arsenal* 29 yrs
STEVE STONE *Nottm Forest* 24 yrs
JASON WILCOX *Blackburn* 25 yrs
FORWARDS
LES FERDINAND *Newcastle* 29 yrs
ROBBIE FOWLER *Liverpool* 21 yrs
ALAN SHEARER *Blackburn* 25 yrs
TEDDY SHERINGHAM *Tottenham* 30 yrs

Same auld story

Alan Fairley on a tough challenge for the Scots

NEVER in the history of Scottish football has the result of a friendly international caused such a poignant level of despondency.

The dejected players trooped off the pitch in Copenhagen a few weeks ago after being comprehensively outclassed by Denmark, suitably depressed in the knowledge that they were simply not good enough to compete at the highest level of world football.

It was not just the scoreline which had engendered such an inordinate level of self-doubt, a 2-0 defeat away to the reigning European champions could hardly be interpreted as a disgrace. But the manner of the defeat proved unacceptable.

The Scots had been made to look third-rate by the strong-running, tactically aware Danes who, after scoring twice in the first half through the supremely talented Laudrup brothers, Brian and Michael, displayed commendable clemency by dropping down several gears and settling for a victory which scarcely reflected the gargantuan chasm in quality.

Taking into account the fact that Denmark are not widely regarded as being among the front runners from the 16 nations in Euro 96, it was no surprise to find that those reliable judges of potential winners and losers, the bookmakers, had quickly relegated Scotland to 80-1 outsiders alongside Turkey.

"It's a fact of life that we have to make do with the resources available," said a clearly shaken national coach, Craig Brown, in the aftermath of the Copenhagen debacle. Brown was alluding to the fact that the players to which he currently has access are mere journeymen when compared with such as Jim Baxter, Denis Law, Kenny Dalglish and Graeme Souness, who were available to his predecessors.

Brown is relying heavily on the players who battled so efficiently to scrape together an adequate collection of points to secure qualification from an extremely difficult group, and whose collective siege mentality has helped regenerate an enthusiastic response from the previously apathetic Scottish footballing public.

There are a few exceptions, with John McGinlay, Duncan Shearer and John Robertson all having been omitted from the squad for England and being faced with the harsh reality that their respective international careers have reached a conclusion.

Those reliable judges of winners and losers, the bookmakers, relegated Scotland to 80-1 outsiders

Blackburn's Kevin Gallacher has been drafted in to provide cover up front while Coventry's Eoin Jess, omitted from the original squad as a result of his loss of form since moving from Aberdeen, has been recalled to replace Celtic captain Paul McStay, forced to miss the tournament due to an ankle operation.

Another potential absentee is Rangers defender Alan McLaren, also facing summer surgery. McLaren is hoping to recover in time for the trip to England but Middlesbrough's Derek Whyte, a long-term absentee from the international scene, is standing by.

Regardless, however, of the unrelenting mood of pessimism which prevails, the Scots will, once again have the opportunity to face their greatest rivals, England, in the Wembley Stadium showdown between the two nations on June 15.

It's been a long time since a single international fixture captured the country's imagination in such a manner, and Scotland's paltry ticket allocation for the game, the first between the two countries for six years, has created a supremely active black market, unseen since the days when the annual clash with the 'Auld Enemy' held almost unrivalled prominence in the Scottish footballing calendar.

Craig Brown has been at pains to stress that defeating England, satisfying as it would be, is by no means the principal objective of Scotland's participation in Euro 96, but even he was unable to disguise his elation when the two were paired. "It's the one the fans want," beamed Brown at the time and that sentiment has been evidenced by the huge demand for the few seats set aside at Wembley for the travelling Tartan Army.

Brown knows, however, that the players will need equally to focus on the matches with Holland and Switzerland which fall on either side of the Wembley game.

With Holland acknowledged as one of the firm favourites, the matches against England and Switzerland undoubtedly hold the key to Scotland's progress and the best Brown realistically can hope for is that his team will go into the final game against the Swiss at Villa Park with a chance of progressing to the next stage – this previously has proved to be beyond any Scottish international team.

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
ANDY GORAM *Rangers* 32 yrs
JIM LEIGHTON *Hibernian* 37 yrs
NICKY WALKER *Partick Thistle* 33 yrs

DEFENDERS
TOMMY BOYD *Celtic* 30 yrs
CRAIG BURLEY *Chelsea (Eng)* 24 yrs
COLIN CALDERWOOD *Tottenham (Eng)* 31 yrs
COLIN HENDRY *Blackburn Rovers (Eng)* 30 yrs
ALAN McLAREN *Rangers* 25 yrs
STEWART McKIMMIE *Aberdeen* 33 yrs
TOSH McGINLEY *Celtic* 31 yrs

MIDFIELDERS
JOHN COLLINS *Celtic* 28 yrs
SCOT GEMMILL *Nottingham Forest (Eng)* 25 yrs
EOIN JESS *Coventry City (Eng)* 25 yrs
GARY McALLISTER *Leeds (Eng)* 31 yrs
STUART McCALL *Rangers* 31 yrs
BILLY McKINLAY *Blackburn Rovers (Eng)* 27 yrs

FORWARDS
SCOTT BOOTH *Aberdeen* 24 yrs
DARREN JACKSON *Hibernian* 29 yrs
ALLY McCOIST *Rangers* 33 yrs
JOHN SPENCER *Chelsea (Eng)* 25 yrs
GORDON DURIE *Rangers* 30 yrs
KEVIN GALLACHER *Blackburn Rovers (Eng)* 29 yrs

STAR MAN
ALLY McCOIST

A FEW months ago, Scottish national coach Craig Brown, meticulous as ever, contacted all the players who were, at that time, regarded as potential candidates for his squad for Euro 96 and asked them to nominate their first and second choices for jersey numbers, in the event that they were selected.

Ally McCoist replied that his first choice was Number 9 and his second choice was Number 9!

Such supreme self confidence could come only from a player such as McCoist, who has been one of the great achievers in the Scottish game since moving to Rangers in 1983 after a mediocre spell in English football with Sunderland.

McCoist, one of the few Rangers players to have survived from the pre-Souness days, has held on to the role of principal striker at Ibrox for well over a decade, withstanding challenges from Robert Fleck, Kevin Drinkell, Mark Falco, Mo Johnston and Mark Hateley.

His international career began in 1984 in a friendly against Holland and since then he has been a regular in the Scotland team, scoring a succession of vital goals and underlining his stature as a 'big occasion' player.

Euro 96 is likely to provide him with his last opportunity of performing on a global stage.

PLAYER TO WATCH: DARREN JACKSON

DARREN JACKSON took a long time to establish himself as a Scottish international but now that he's achieved that goal, he is determined to enjoy every minute of his involvement.

Having plodded along in unspectacular fashion while playing for Meadowbank Thistle, Newcastle and Dundee United, Jackson finally demonstrated his ability to perform at a higher level when he moved to Hibernian in 1992. At Hibs, his versatility in dropping back to an attacking midfield role earned a call-up from Craig Brown.

An indication of Jackson's willingness to be involved with the squad was apparent when he heard that some of his team-mates were less than keen on travelling to Moscow for the Euro 96 qualifier against Russia, due to the apparently spartan facilities at the Lenin Stadium. Jackson said he'd be happy to sweep the dressing room floor if it meant getting a game for Scotland.

Starring or squabbling

Rino Landa fears that old capacity to self-destruct

STAR MAN
Patrick Kluivert

PATRICK KLUIVERT has had to grow up very quickly. First he became an overnight soccer sensation with his propensity for scoring winning goals in vital matches, then he had to face the pain of a court case arising out of his reckless driving which led to another motorist's death.

Kluivert, who is still only 19, scored the goal with which Ajax beat Milan. This latest great Dutch talent will, so it seems, move to Milan next year when his current contract with Ajax expires.

Kluivert grew up in north Amsterdam and joined Ajax's youth programme aged seven. He was pressed into first-team action against Feyenoord in August 1994 and has been virtually ever-present since. Strong and agile, Kluivert combines football talent with the power of a sprint athlete.

He is one of the new generation of 'thinking' footballers developed in the Ajax nurseries – though that has not saved him from the youthful excess which ended in disaster last autumn. A three-month prison sentence, also imposed by the court, is suspended, thus leaving Kluivert 'free' to concentrate on Euro 96.

Ajax friends and coaches fear, privately, that the crash and the court process may well affect Kluivert's ability to cope with the pressures of Euro 96 and the expectations of Dutch fans. But if he can concentrate on his football, Kluivert could end Euro 96 as one of the biggest stars on the world stage.

HOLLAND squeezed into the finals of Euro 96 yet, for all that, have been saddled by some bookmakers with the role of 9-2 favourites.

That may seem illogical but, in some ways, it sums up Holland's prospects in any big event: all or nothing. Either Holland are harmony personified or they are tearing themselves apart with that self-destructive tendency to allow squabbles over politics, personalities and coaching theories to wreck morale.

But this may be a new Holland. Gone are the Championship-winning heroes of eight years ago such as Ruud Gullit, Frank Rijkaard, Marco Van Basten, Jan Wouters, Arnold Muhren and Ronald Koeman.

The new Dutch side, sparking memories of the total football era of the 1970s, are built around a nucleus of players from European champions Ajax and mirror their exciting blend of youth and technical excellence.

Of course, the likes of Jari Litmanen and Finidi George cannot be imported into the national team. But the rest of Dutch football should prove more capable of filling the few gaps which arise. Coach Guus Hiddink has no doubt.

Holland can stamp their class on these finals just as Ajax have done in European club competition

He gave up a "true national team" concept midway through a stuttering qualifying campaign to throw in his lot with the Ajax model. That's why the likes of PSV's Wim Jonk have no role to play for Holland now.

He is an outsider in contrast to Arsenal's Dennis Bergkamp, who plays in England but remains an Ajax player in philosophy and style.

Hiddink believes his squad have a sense of unity and purpose which was lacking even in Johan Cruyff's team of the early 1970s and the European champions of Gullit, Rijkaard and Van Basten.

Holland can stamp their class on these finals just as Ajax have done in European club competition, but Hiddink admits it has not been as simple as outsiders might have expected. The 11th-hour qualification for Euro 96 owed much to the problems of working out how to adapt the Ajax style to the national team.

The Ajax players in the Dutch side who lost so dismally to both Belarus and the Czech Republic in qualifying games were the same as those who delighted the neutrals in outclassing the Irish Republic in Liverpool.

Those two early defeats nearly cost the Dutch dear. They had to win their last three qualifying games, and beat the Irish, to sneak second place in Group Seven.

PLAYER TO WATCH: Edgar Davids

THE BOSMAN ruling was like an early Christmas present for Ajax midfielder Edgar Davids. He knew his contract with the club was running out this summer and he wanted to move abroad to taste football in Latin Europe. But he was not sure whether one of the big Italian or Spanish clubs would be prepared to pay the enormous fee needed to persuade Ajax to sell.

Then, with one slip of a pen in the European Court, everything changed. Players who are out of contract and want to move to another European Union country were given their freedom. Within weeks both Davids and Ajax team-mate Michael Reiziger – facing the same dilemma – had agreed terms with Milan. They have been 'presented' at the Milanello training centre and they will start their new careers following a short holiday once Euro 96 is over.

Davids is considered potentially a new Frank Rijkaard. Like Rijkaard, Davids has been ruling the Ajax midfield with his speed, strength and creativity.

Milan had first-hand experience of Davids' talent a year ago when he helped Ajax beat them in the Champions League Cup Final in Vienna.

A powerful, home-grown talent, Davids is still only 23 but has adopted the Gullit dreadlocks and learned to control a temper which, at one stage in his young career, threatened to derail his ambition

Davids says: "I got a lot of yellow and red cards when I was a teenage player. They used to tell me, 'you can win a thousand wars, but you're not a real fighter until you've conquered yourself.' I still have the fire in me, but I'm more sensible now."

But, the Dutch argue, they had not been playing the real Ajax way earlier in the qualifiers. The players looked out of sorts against lowly opposition from Malta and Luxembourg but struck form for the final run-in to England.

Now the system is right and the players are right. Patrick Kluivert may say that this Holland will not be at their best until 1998 or even the year 2000 . . . but if Holland do not go within striking distance of a second European title, they will not be the only ones taken by surprise.

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
ED DE GOEY *Feyenoord* 29 yrs
EDWIN VAN DER SAR *Ajax* 25 yrs
RUUD HESP *Roda JC* 20 yrs

DEFENDERS
DANNY BLIND *Ajax* 34 yrs
WINSTON BOGARDE *Ajax* 24 yrs
FRANK DE BOER *Ajax* 26 yrs
JOHANN DE KOCK *Roda JC* 31 yrs
ARTHUR NUMAN *PSV Eindhoven* 26 yrs
MICHAEL REIZIGER *Ajax* 23 yrs
JOHN VELDMAN *Sparta Rotterdam* 28 yrs

MIDFIELDERS
DENNIS BERGKAMP *Arsenal (Eng)* 27 yrs
PHILIP COCU *PSV Eindhoven* 25 yrs
EDGAR DAVIDS *Ajax* 23 yrs
RONALD DE BOER *Ajax* 26 yrs
CLARENCE SEEDORF *Sampdoria (Ita)* 20 yrs
ARON WINTER *Internazionale (Ita)* 29 yrs
RICHARD WITSCHGE *Bordeaux (Fra)* 26 yrs

FORWARDS
PETER HOEKSTRA *Ajax* 23 yrs
JORDI CRUYFF *Barcelona (Spa)* 22 yrs
PATRICK KLUIVERT *Ajax* 19 yrs
YURI MULDER *Schalke (Ger)* 27 yrs
GASTON TAUMENT *Feyenoord* 26 yrs

Teething trouble

In his brief time in charge, Artur Jorge has done little to inspire confidence, says Arthur Rotmil

SWITZERLAND's preparations for the European Championships got off to an inauspicious start, placing the new manager, the Portuguese coach Artur Jorge, under unnecessary pressure.

A forgettable 1-1 draw in Luxembourg, a disturbingly negative 1-0 defeat in Austria and a positive but hardly-worth-shouting-about 2-0 home win against an under-strength Wales earned more criticism than praise for the reshaped team.

Clearly, the first 100 days of Jorge's reign have not raised the morale of the players, nor the hopes of the fans, while the media chose to adopt a wait-and-see stance, reserving their judgment for the start of the campaign.

The new boss still has communication problems. Some of his decisions are puzzling and his attitude not always understood by all. So the serious media representatives are still undecided as to whether his is the right way to lead the national side.

Jorge undoubtedly added to the controversy by his departure from the tried and trusted 4-4-2 system, opting instead to play against Wales with three strikers.

It was hoped that this was only a one-off experiment, for nobody in Switzerland is expecting the team to play against England at Wembley with a formation so committed to attack. For those who doubt his motives the chief has this unconvincing explanation: "We have so many good forwards, why shouldn't we use them?"

The first 100 days of Artur Jorge's reign have not raised the morale of the players, nor the hopes of the fans, while the media chose to adopt a wait-and-see stance

For a start because it would be a big risk to pick three strikers who like to go forward, but who are loath to drop back to help out in defence. In such a strong group as the Swiss are facing those tactics would be well nigh suicidal.

Generally it is expected that in the opening match Stephane Chapuisat, now apparently fully recovered following the lengthy lay-off after cruciate ligament damage, and the returned exile Kubilay Turkyilmaz will form the attacking tandem against England. The fact that no fewer than nine players are serving with clubs abroad, and most of them were still engaged in May in vital club matches, has not helped Jorge during his final phase of preparation.

He insists first and foremost on discipline and organisation, but he is quite flexible as regards tactical deployment. His four defenders in a line employ zonal marking, while both full-backs attack on the flanks. Contrary to some ill-informed commentators, there are hardly any teams on the Continent who use strict man-to-man marking.

In midfield the technically outstanding Ciriaco Sforza pulls the strings. He has improved enormously since moving to Bayern Munich and gaining the chance to play in European club competitions. But his role in the national side is slightly different, more liberal in its interpretation.

The only problem concerns the goalkeeper. The number one, Marco Pascolo, has attracted controversy ever since his first international four years ago against the United Arab Emirates. One of the country's mass circulation tabloids is even calling him "Flopolo".

But those who matter still support him. Former national team boss Roy Hodgson stuck with him oblivious to the criticism. In club matches he doesn't always command the penalty area, while his clearances are often faulty. On the other hand, Pascolo has hardly any serious rivals as the other keepers lack his international experience. And that is probably why Jorge will also bank on him in preference to those who are untried.

That the team is stronger in attack than defence is beyond dispute, though half the foreign legionnaires are defenders. But they have all learned to adapt to new training methods and tactical concepts. Most of the Swiss have also become mentally toughened up, especially those from the Latin part of the country who now combine technical prowess with physical commitment far more effectively.

The senior member of the squad, central defender Alain Geiger, 35, a 'centurion' in terms of caps, is confident: "We are in a very tough group, but there is now a marvellous spirit within the team and all the players believe we can make the quarter-finals."

STAR MAN
Ciriaco Sforza

SWITZERLAND's technically most accomplished player is the midfield general Ciriaco Sforza, who since his £3.5m move within the German Bundesliga from Kaiserslautern to Bayern Munich last year has had to adjust his role.

In Munich he is one of four or five potential playmakers, in the national side he is the only chief. Sforza, who was born in Switzerland but has Italian parents, is hoping eventually to continue his career with a top Italian club.

He began with two amateur clubs before signing for FC Aarau, his home town outfit. He celebrated his League debut at 16 – highly unusual in Swiss football – with the country's biggest club Grasshopper, where he made his name between 1989 and 1993, before moving to the Bundesliga.

Six years ago he took Swiss nationality and in 1991 was called up to the national side. He was at first used as a sweeper until Roy Hodgson entrusted him with the key position in central midfield. This constructive positional change also speeded up his move abroad.

Last year he attracted interest from Barcelona but decided to sign for Bayern. The Swiss are expecting a lot from this gifted player, but he is not afraid of responsibility.

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
STEPHAN LEHMANN *Sion* 32 yrs
MARCO PASCOLO *Servette* 30 yrs
PASCAL ZUBERBUHLER *Grasshopper* 25 yrs

DEFENDERS
ALAIN GEIGER *Grasshopper* 35 yrs
STEPHAN HENCHOZ *Hamburg SV (Ger)* 21 yrs
DOMINIQUE HERR *Sion* 30 yrs
MARC HOTTIGER *Everton (Eng)* 28 yrs
YVAN QUENTIN *Sion* 26 yrs
RAPHAEL WICKY *Sion* 19 yrs
RAMON VEGA *Grasshopper* 25 yrs
JOHANN VOGEL *Grasshopper* 19 yrs

MIDFIELDERS
CHRISTIAN COLOMBO *Sion* 28 yrs
ALEXANDRE COMISETTI *Grasshopper* 22 yrs
SEBASTIEN FOURNIER *Sion* 24 yrs
CHRISTOPHE OHREL *St Etienne (Fra)* 28 yrs
CIRIACO SFORZA *Bayern Munich (Ger)* 26 yrs
ALAIN SUTTER *Freiburg (Ger)* 28 yrs
MURAT YAKIN *Grasshopper* 21 yrs

FORWARDS
STEPHANE CHAPUISAT *Borussia Dortmund (Ger)* 26 yrs
MARCO GRASSI *Rennes (Fra)* 30 yrs
ADRIAN KNUP *Karlsruhe (Ger)* 27 yrs
KUBILAY TURKYILMAZ *Grasshopper* 29 yrs

PLAYER TO WATCH: Murat Yakin

OF THE crop of highly talented youngsters who burst on the scene during the past couple of years, perhaps the most promising is Murat Yakin from Grasshopper Zurich.

His favourite position is in front of the defence, though for his club he can and has played almost everywhere. A great international career is predicted for Yakin, who is only 21.

Four years ago he moved from Second Division FC Concordia but was recently hit by a series of muscle injuries. The periods of in-activity have at least contributed to make him more patient and calm. He could be the ideal partner for Sforza.

Yakin is of Turkish origin and he has to support his poor family financially. One more reason why he is determined to do well in the European Championship. "The fat bonuses will come in handy," he says. A good showing in England would also attract interest from rich clubs abroad, and this is his declared goal.

Sofia yet so far

The game may be up for the Bulgars, says Bob Vaughan

IT ALL looks somewhat thin and has done most of the spring: the warm-up programme, the inability to score goals, the absence of the playmaker Stoichkov and, for that matter, the words of manager Dimitar Penev.

Another domestic Cup Final farce as background did not help, but with or without a completed match, it is doubtful if crowds will exactly stream to the farewell friendlies.

The earlier tests at Wembley and in Trnava demonstrated a lack of punch. While the encounter with England at Wembley was the first get-together of a far-flung squad since the final qualifying game in November, in Berlin, there was no excuse for the equally tame display against the Slovaks.

The Bulgarian coach was, as usual, charming and diplomatic and indeed Jozef Venglos' old team had the chances in the first half to go ahead. On the other hand Penev's claim that "the Slovaks were a strong test for us, their performances in the quality matches with Romania and France have been undervalued" sounded like the cry of a man who has run out of ideas.

The Championship record is weak, form is modest, the players will have not been available for long

In fact, the game may be up and a modest Slovak outfit, struggling to obtain top experience, exposed a doubtful Bulgarian defence and had little trouble holding the Bulgars in midfield.

The matches with Macedonia and the United Arab Emirates should give the forwards some chances against modest opposition to find the net and surely Penev must recall Nasko Sirakov after his shooting Slavia to their first title in five decades as well as the double. The two games do not give much match practice before Bulgaria run out at Elland Road.

Javier Clemente must be licking his lips.He will know all about Mr "I am genial but mad" Stoichkov from the latter's time in Spain, but perhaps he will not even have to worry about the former European Footballer of the Year? Doubtless wild horses will not keep the Bulgarian *chef d'orchestre* away from starting at Leeds, but what shape will he be in and will there be the usual question as to whether he or Penev really runs the show?

It does not augur well and the successful team at World Cup USA looks unlikely to go very far. The European Championship record is weak, form is modest, the players in the Bundesliga and Iberia will have not been available for long and there is not much in the way of newcomers coming through.

Penev has tinkered with the squad, bringing in the two Christovs, Rumen from CSKA, a striker, and Marian, a midfielder from the successful Slavia side. But they have little international experience and no great goalscoring history. Other changes include the nomination of Slavia's Zdravkov as third goalkeeper, with Dartilov (Levski) losing his place. Neither is very significant now that Mihailov and Hubchev are fit, one of the few chinks of light.

On the other hand the Bulgars have surprised the French before and Penev is still saying: "For two years now we have had a team the like of which Bulgaria never had before, once in 100 years."

He may be using the past tense but perhaps all is not doom and gloom? Penev is a winner as he showed as a player. He was seven times a champion, won five Cups, was capped 90 times and played in every match in the final rounds of the 1966, 1970 and 1974 World Cups, though they failed to go far.

Now the stocky 50-year-old from Mirovane faces an even bigger test than the 1994 World Cup. Then there was little expected of them. Now his team are expected by their domestic followers to at least reach the quarter-finals.

The Berlin and Wembley dents will not prevent a bigger-than-ever party of fans following the team to the West, but the likelihood is that it will all be over much sooner than in the USA. The cynics may be right in their view that in the first series of matches Spain and France will see off their respective Balkan challengers. They then meet in Leeds knowing the outcome of the Bulgaria-Romania game at St James' Park 48 hours earlier.

A draw may be enough to guarantee their further progress. Unfortunately this is how such competitions are won and lost but the Bulgarians, at their first European finals, would not wish for a return to the days of the earlier 1970s, with just semi-finals and a Final.

At least they are on the world scene and are fielding, as Penev rightly says, their best-ever team. Sadly, it may not be enough this time round. Teesside Airport here they come again!

STAR MAN
Krassimir Balakov

LAST SUMMER he won the Portuguese Cup with Sporting Lisbon, the year before that he was part of Penev's star ensemble in America. And now for a season he has been with VfB Stuttgart.

Balakov is one of the most complete footballers in the Bundesliga and a man who likes and seeks perfection in everything he does on or off the field. He is elegant, creative and intelligence personified.

Last year he was Bulgaria's Footballer of the Year – not bad for a young lad who started aged 16 in the first team of Bulgarian provincials 'UT' and had to overcome a career-threatening injury a decade ago.

Having rescued it, he foolishly got on the wrong side of the Bulgarian Football Union by signing for both Etar and CSKA! Fortunately the suspension in 1990 was brief and he was subsequently able to follow the lure of the escudo.

At 30 he should be at his peak as he approaches 60 caps for his country.

PLAYER TO WATCH: Nasko Sirakov

HE IS an obvious choice. He is not up-and-coming or one for the future. He has, in fact, been around a long time. He has not featured in Penev's opening gambit plans too often in recent times, but Nasko Sirakov may be the striker to save the Bulgarian bacon.

Sirakov has been a wanderer and has often been a substitute for the national team. But his form this season has put his latest club, Slavia, at the top of the table and given the country's oldest club the 'double' after many years of missing out.

Euro 96 will almost certainly be a swansong for Sirakov, who was 34 in April. But it should see him top 80 caps and he will perhaps be the man to break the goal famine – his first 77 caps brought 22 goals.

Glasgow Rangers will need no reminding of how dangerous he can be. Sirakov played a starring role in the Scottish Champions' elimination from Champions Cup three years back.

Strangely, the man with the best striking rate after Stoichkov in Bulgarian football history was remarkably shot-shy in Spain, initially with Real Zaragoza and then Espanyol. His last spell abroad, in France with Lens, was also only modestly successful. But Penev needs Nasko's nose for goal!

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
BORISLAV MIHAILOV *Reading (Eng)* 33 yrs
DIMITAR POPOV *CSKA Sofia* 26 yrs
ZDRAVKO ZDRAVKOV *Slavia Sofia* 25 yrs

DEFENDERS
GOSHO GINCHEV *Levski Sofia* 26 yrs
PETAR HUBCHEV *Hamburg (Ger)* 32 yrs
TROFON IVANOV *Rapid Vienna (Aus)* 30 yrs
RADOSTIN KICHICHEV *Neftochimik* 21 yrs
ILIAN KIRIAKOV *Anorthosis (Cyp)* 28 yrs
EMIL KREMENLIEV *Olympiakos (Gre)* 26 yrs
TSANKO TZVETANOV *Waldhof-Wannheim (Ger)* 26 yrs

MIDFIELDERS
IVALO YORDANOV *Sporting Lisbon (Por)* 28 yrs
ZLATKO YANKOV *KFC Uerdingen (Ger)* 29 yrs
BONTCHO GUENTCHEV *Luton Town (Eng)* 31 yrs
DANIEL BORIMIROV *1860 Munich (Ger)* 26 yrs
YORDAN LECHKOV *Hamburg (Ger)* 28 yrs
KRASSIMIR BALAKOV *Stuttgart (Ger)* 30 yrs

FORWARDS
EMIL KOSTADINOV *Bayern Munich (Ger)* 28 yrs
HRISTO STOICHKOV *Parma (Ita)* 30 yrs
LUBOSLAV PENEV *Atletico Madrid (Spa)* 29 yrs
NASKO SIRAKOV *Slavia Sofia* 34 yrs
GEORGI DONKOV *CSKA Sofia* 26 yrs
IVO GEORGIEV *Spartak Varna* 22 yrs

Too much talent

Andre Duclos on why there is no room for Cantona

WHEN Aime Jacquet took over the French international team, he must have been one of the few who saw himself as anything but a stopgap.

French phrases come to mind. *Faute de mieux. Pis aller.* Michel Platini had kicked himself upstairs. Gerard Houllier, exposed to the full cruel blasts of publicity when Platini gave up the national managership, found himself far less happy than he had been in club football. And David Ginola still seems to feel that Houllier, untypically, made him the scapegoat when Bulgaria broke away to score that very late, quite traumatising, World Cup goal at Parc des Princes, which put the Bulgarians through to the USA finals at our expense.

Jacquet, in the interim, has used Ginola only sporadically, and it is now taken for granted that he will get a 'thanks but no thanks' for the European Championship. This despite the tremendous irony that he has had so many fine games for Newcastle United on their Gallowgate pitch. Jacquet does not care and has not been impressed.

For him, the crucial consideration has not been so much how Ginola has played, but how he has behaved. And for Jacquet, Ginola has protested too much.

So player after new attacking player has been drafted into the team while Ginola, to his bitter frustration, has been excluded. Because, in a nutshell, Jacquet does not want him to upset the even tenor of the squad.

The Cantona case is a very different one, though to be exact Cantona over the years has been a far more difficult customer than Ginola. That he has come into any kind of consideration at all – let alone initially being made the captain by Jacquet – is a tribute to French forgiveness. This is a player who obscenely insulted a previous French manager, Henri Michel, and insulted every one of the disciplinary appeals committee before taking off for England.

With this volatile but greatly gifted footballer, however, the case has been tactical rather than temperamental. How to accommodate Cantona, for all his virtuosity, into the present team's schemes without upsetting them has been the problem.

Again I must use that French phrase, an embarrassment of riches. That astonishingly long unbeaten run, that amazing ability continually to ring the changes with no obvious ill effect, have characterised Jacquet's stewardship and routed his erstwhile critics. And it IS an embarrassment, for whom should he play, whom can he drop?

France, for example, won comfortably in Belgium without either of the midfielders now playing so successfully in Italy, Didier Deschamps, who helped Juventus to the European Champions Final, and Marcel Desailly, so powerful a presence in a Milan team who won the championship yet again.

With Cantona the case has been tactical not temperamental. How to accommodate him, for all his virtuosity, has been the problem

Christian Karembeu, that other fine French midfielder now operating in Italy, with Sampdoria, played in the Belgian game. Like Desailly, he can function happily at centre-back if needed; one imagines that Desailly probably will revert to centre-back in England. Though we have Laurent Blanc and the experienced Alain Roche, back from injury, to contest the role.

Then there is a defender shortly en route for Italy, the muscular 24-year-old Lilian Thuram. Against Belgium he was used at right-back, but centre-back is his true position and he has had a fine season with Monaco.

Move forward through the team and the divine embarrassment becomes more embarrassing. On the face of it, you could hardly dispense with the partnership made in Heaven: that between Youri Djorkaeff, now at Paris St Germain and finally firing on all cylinders, and the taller, younger Zinedine Zidane of Bordeaux.

These two, as I have written here before, have blended into a delightful partnership; and both can score goals.

Zidane, indeed, is expected in France to become one of the great stars of the championships. Yet neither of them played against Belgium and neither really seemed to be missed. Which means, I suppose, that France are admirably equipped for the killing three-games-in-a week endeavour which awaits the teams.

The two Auxerre midfielders, Sabri Lamouchi and Corentin Martins, came in for that Belgian game, and very well they did, too. Martins was winning his 12th cap. He is of Portuguese origin, a skilled player who perhaps for the first time really showed what he can do at international level as the key schemer.

Lamouchi, who can play in a variety of positions, but likes to break into attack, chose France as opposed to his parents' country, Tunisia, and has been one of the revelations of the year.

How, though, will France play? If it is in a more defensive mode, they could use 30-year-old Vincent Guerin wide on the left. Reynald Pedros is a natural left-winger, but his temper is suspect – note the five-game European suspension with Nantes – and he hardly excelled in Brussels.

Christophe Dugarry, another Bordeaux player, excellent in their European bid, rivals Patrice Loko, who seems calm and serene again, for the centre-forward role; with Nicolas Ouedec out injured.

France surely will do much better than in 1992.

STAR MAN
MARCEL DESAILLY

FOR a player of his power and talents, Marcel Desailly has had fewer caps than you would have expected; though this is partly because he was not always available.

Desailly was born in Accra, Ghana, in September, 1968. On going to France, he was taken on by Nantes. There, he had six good seasons, from 1986 to 1992, before he went to Marseille.

Remarkably, he won European Cup medals in consecutive seasons, first with Marseille in 1993, then with Milan in 1994.

For France, he says he prefers to play in the middle of the back four rather than in midfield. If required, he also can operate at right-back.

His game certainly has improved since he went to Milan, where he has been a bulwark in midfield, winning two championship medals.

He says he would never have thought he would be playing for a foreign club, let alone Milan. But when, after an early game, that old warhorse Franco Baresi came up and complimented him – "You're doing us good defensively" – he knew that he was there to stay.

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
FABIEN BARTHEZ *Monaco* 24 yrs
BERNARD LAMA *Paris St Germain* 32 yrs
BRUNI MARTINI *Montpellier* 33 yrs

DEFENDERS
JOCELYN ANGLOMA *Torino (Ita)* 30 yrs
LAURENT BLANC *Auxerre* 30 yrs
MARCEL DESAILLY *Milan (Ita)* 27 yrs
ERIC DI MECO *Monaco* 32 yrs
FRANCK LEBOEUF *Strasbourg* 28 yrs
BIXENTE LIZARAZU *Bordeaux* 26 yrs
ALAIN ROCHE *Paris St Germain* 28 yrs
LILIAN THURAM *Monaco* 24 yrs

MIDFIELDERS
DIDIER DESCHAMPS *Juventus (Ita)* 27 yrs
YOURI DJORKAEFF *Paris St Germain* 28 yrs
VINCENT GUERIN *Paris St Germain* 30 yrs
CHRISTIAN KAREMBEU *Sampdoria (Ita)* 25 yrs
SABRI LAMOUCHI *Auxerre* 24 yrs
CORENTIN MARTINS *Auxerre* 26 yrs
REYNALD PEDROS *Nantes* 24 yrs
ZINEDINE ZIDANE *Bordeaux* 23 yrs

FORWARDS
CHRISTOPHE DUGARRY *Bordeaux* 24 yrs
PATRICE LOKO *Paris St Germain* 26 yrs
MICHAEL MADAR *Monaco* 28 yrs

PLAYER TO WATCH: ZINEDINE ZIDANE

TALL, strong, inventive, technically adroit and a regular goalscorer, Zidane made his debut for France against the Czechs in August 1994, as a 21-year-old. French critics see him as an artist.

Whether playing for his club, Bordeaux, or with his preferred partner, Youri Djorkaeff, for France, he has been a hugely influential figure this season. Bordeaux hardly would have knocked Milan out of the UEFA Cup without him. Oddly, his remarkable debut for France was made as substitute for an injured Djorkaeff. By his own admission he had been in poor club form, but he proceeded to score twice to save the game.

Zidane learned to dribble, he says, in the streets of Marseille. He still employs the skill to do what he likes best, get quickly forward, but, as he says, he mustn't abuse it. "I must dribble as little as possible. One, two, three touches, no more, and a pass at the right moment!"

Marching orders

Bob Vaughan on 'General' Iordanescu, rallying his ageing troops for one last tilt at a title

IT HAS been a fraught spring for 'General' Iordanescu and his troops with a potentially explosive dispute between the coach and the federation averted at the 11th hour.

The infantry reserves won the King's Cup in Bangkok but the Romanian Federation was critical of the lack of arrangements for friendlies with quality opposition and some factions of its International Committee thought the manager should have been giving that matter his attention as well as spending his time scouting his Western European-based squad.

Iordanescu remained his own man, criticised domestic soccer corruption and resigned. This provoked almost a national crisis and President Iliescu was forced to intervene to prevent his football supremo moving abroad and leaving Romania in the lurch.

Fences have been mended, but plans have not been helped by Steaua's early victory in the title race. It meant that at least six or seven members of the squad from the domestic Champions could have a lengthy break, which might not aid those still flogging League and Cup horses in Southern Europe and the Bundesliga.

Iordanescu will have taken all this in his stride. He had, remarkably, played no fewer than six friendlies by the time Euro 96 was due to start. Some, such as the games with the Thais, Finns and Danes in Bangkok, were mostly with the reserves; others, with Georgia and with the United Arab Emirates just before departure to Euro 96, were with the full squad.

Only the re-establishment-of-relations game with Yugoslavia was a test in the real sense, but the 10-day training camp at Seefeld in Austria, with 20 of the pre-selected pool of players, was an opportunity to have a closer look at things. Popescu, Hagi, Munteanu, Sabau, Moldovan and Selymes were with their clubs but they, plus the pre-selected 20, will form the 26 from which the final 22 are chosen, possibly as late as May 27.

Iordanescu is a winner who tolerates no intolerence, just as he was as a player

It seems late to leave such a decision, which will be hard on the four omitted, but Iordanescu is a winner who tolerates no interference, just as he was as a player for Steaua and the international team. He has been in office since taking over from the unfortunate Cornul Dinu, who had to go at the end of summer 1993 after the disastrous 5-2 defeat to the RCS in Kosice in a World Cup qualifier.

'The General' put things right, got the team to the USA, and now leads Romania into only their second European finals. He is a protagonist of offensive football. As a player, he scored 26 goals in 64 full internationals and his USA World Cup side reflected this. He is a footballers' footballer through and through. "Whoever tries to understand my tactics must realise that I often reach decisions just by gut reaction," he says.

Some of the scientific football school might tut at such a remark but it seems to work and the Iordanescu record as player, coach and manager is not to be sniffed at. He also has an interesting, talented squad but an ageing one.

However, many of the foreign-based stars may be tired and Romania's European record is a poor one. They also do not travel well in Anglo-Saxon climes and will not appreciate the coolness of the North-East weather. Their record, however, against the Group B opposition is good. Surprisingly, they have won as many games as they've lost against Spain and France, and matches with Bulgaria have usually been won, with 21 victories in 34 encounters. So it could all be close.

The second tie with the old enemy from across the Danube, where Slav meets Latin, will be vital. There will be Balkan passion in the air on June 13, when Iordanescu's Romanians take on Penev's Bulgarians. It will be the unofficial championship of the region, a transplanted local derby and possibly a fight to stay in the championships – if the first series of games, when the Bulgars meet Spain and Romania confront France, have gone badly.

Will Hagi and Co have the legs? For several of the veterans, it could be the last throw of the international football dice, certainly in a European Championship!

STAR MAN
Miodrag Belodedici

HE WILL probably not score any goals, though he has averaged one every nine games for his country, and there may not be much opportunity to get forward, but Miodrag is of star quality.

Iordanescu will be expecting him to boss the back line and many other things beside. That should be no problem for the returning hero, who has just celebrated his 32nd birthday.

The long-time Steaua 'last man' has seen it all before and is one of the few players to win the Champions Cup with two clubs. He played alongside Iordanescu in Steaua's 1986 triumph over Terry Venables' Barcelona in Seville and, after his flight to Yugoslavia and suspension, did the trick again, this time for Red Star Belgrade in 1991.

With the political change, he was able to return from exile and eventually to international football. His sureness at the back, skill on the ball and vision have been appreciated not only at Steaua and Red Star but also during spells in Spain, at Valencia, Valladolid and Second Division Villarreal.

There must be a question as to whether this step down will have affected his sharpness, and the defender's pace might be suspect against the fleet-footed Spanish and French. He may have to rely on the legs of the likes of Dan Petrescu. Nevertheless, look out for the skill.

PLAYER TO WATCH: Ilie Dumitrescu

HE IS well known to the host nation's fans, but he has not had it easy in the Premiership. However, the corner seems to have been turned in the polyglot West Ham team, which he joined last season after a frustrating delay over his transfer from Spurs, ending a disappointing time at White Hart Lane.

For 'Dumi' the 1994 World Cup was the springboard. His big moments were in the quarter-final of that competition when, within six minutes, he scored the two goals which gave Romania victory over Argentina.

Then the 25-year-old Steaua striker moved to join Jurgen Klinsmann at Tottenham. He was highly regarded at home and abroad after the Romanian success in the USA, but injury hit him after 11 games for the North London side, then came a change of manager, a stuttering return, playing out of position and loss of favour.

It was a hard road back, though Iordanescu kept faith with the man he knew well from Steaua days and now there is a chance for the Hammer to show again what he can do in a finals series.

The ball is in Ilie's court. He is playing with colleagues he knows well from club football and nearly 60 internationals and he has a manager who appreciates his qualities. Watch for another 1994 burst!

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
FLORIN PRUNEA *Dinamo Bucharest* 27 yrs
BOGDAN STELEA *Steaua Bucharest* 28 yrs
ALEXANDRU TENE *Rapid Bucharest* 27 yrs

DEFENDERS
MIODRAG BELODEDICI *Villarreal (Spa)* 32 yrs
GHEORGHE MIHALI *Guingamp (Fra)* 30 yrs
DAN PETRESCU *Chelsea (Eng)* 28 yrs
GHEORGHE POPSECU *Barcelona (Spa)* 28 yrs
DANIEL PRODAN *Steaua Bucharest* 24 yrs
TIBRO SELYMES *Cercle Bruges (Bel)* 26 yrs

MIDFIELDERS
GHEORGHE HAGI *Barcelona (Spa)* 31 yrs
IOAN LUPESCU *Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)* 27 yrs
DORINAL MUNTEANU *Koln (Ger)* 27 yrs
OVIDIU SABAU *Brescia (Ita)* 28 yrs
NICA PANDURA *Benfica (Por)* 25 yrs
ION TIMOFTE *Boavista (Por)* 28 yrs
DORIN MATEUT *Dinamo Bucharest* 30 yrs
GHEORGHE CRAIOVEANU *Real Sociedad (Spa)* 28 yrs

FORWARDS
ILIE DUMITRESCU *West Ham Utd (Eng)* 27 yrs
MARIUS LACATUS *Steaua Bucharest* 32 yrs
DINU MOLDOVAN *Neuchatel Xamax (Swi)* 23 yrs
FLORIN RADUCIOIU *Espanyol (Spa)* 26 yrs
ION VLADIOU *Steaua Bucharest* 27 yrs

Learning from history

Keir Radnedge on the coach who isn't complaining

SPAIN cruised through into the finals of Euro 96 with a bitter history lesson to spur them on.

Nothing to do with the Armada – more to do with a more recent expedition to England which ended, 30 years ago in the 1966 World Cup finals, in the disappointment of first-round elimination.

Defeats by West Germany and Argentina proved more than Spain could bear, and a victory over Switzerland was merely consolation.

That was more than a generation ago. Spain are back in England but few other similarities remain. For this is not a nervy, overawed Spanish national team. This is a team unbeaten throughout the qualifying contest, a team who have not lost in 16 matches since falling to Italy in the quarter-finals of the 1994 World Cup.

The burden of expectation is thus weighty indeed on the shoulders of coach Javier Clemente – or, at least, it would be on any lesser man than the bouncy Basque. The truth, of course, is that the Spanish national team's solitary triumph – the European Championship on home ground 32 years ago – has been swamped by the club honours hoarded by Real Madrid and Barcelona.

Clemente went close to changing that perception at the 1994 World Cup in the United States and may go closer yet at Euro 96. Spain were the real danger men of the last World Cup. Italy beat them luckily by 2-1 despite being generally outplayed. The Spanish were denied the most blatant penalty of the tournament when Luis Enrique had his nose broken by Mauro Tassotti's deliberate elbow as he rose to meet a corner. An equaliser then against the tiring Italians and Spain would have been favourites to go all the way to the Final.

Referee Sandor Puhl's 'miss' was confirmed when FIFA reviewed the television footage and suspended Tassotti for a record nine matches. That was no consolation for Spain, or course, nor has it spared Clemente continuing scepticism at home.

Clemente's belief in Spanish football is matched only by his respect for the English game

Concern among fans centres over his omission from the Euro 96 squad of Real Madrid sensation Raul and Barcelona prodigy Ivan de la Pena. Clemente made diplomatic noises about both players being kept on stand-by for England as well as being needed for the Atlanta Olympics. When that failed to calm the storm, he confessed to his doubts that a pair of 19-year-olds could handle the pressure of a major tournament.

"They are bright boys," he said. "But they are very tired at the end of their first full championship season. And Euro 96 is a job for men."

Not only France, Romania and Bulgaria but also England, who could meet Spain in a quarter final, as well as the other leading contenders for the Euro title, have been warned.

Clemente's is one of the few teams who have improved in the two years since USA 94, when Europe dominated the quarter-finals with seven of the eight contenders. The imperious manner in which they swept past Denmark, the defending European champions, as well as the crisis-hit Belgians, served qualifying notice on the tournament proper.

According to Clemente, his men are well capable of "coming through a challenging group to meet England in the Final". His belief in Spanish football is matched only by his respect for the English game and concern that his players might be too weary after a season congested by the expansion of the League to 22 clubs.

Clemente's closest concession to youth comes in the form of Bilbao skipper Julen Guerrero. But, £6m superstar or not, even Guerrero may be pressed to find a place in the starting line-up. Clemente generally has preferred Atletico Madrid's underrated Caminero in that 'hole' behind his lead striker – whether he be the revitalised Alfonso or veteran warhorse Julio Salinas.

If Salinas wastes the sort of chance he blew against Italy in the United States, there will be no next time. Perhaps not for Clemente, either.

STAR MAN
Andoni Zubizarreta

EVERYONE assumes that this will be Zubizarreta's last major tournament. But Spain's goalkeeper-captain is one of European football's great survivors.

Two years ago, on the team bus after Barcelona's 4-0 thrashing by Milan, Zubizarreta was told by Johan Cruyff that his services would no longer be required. Most critics thought that was the end.

Instead, Zubizarreta remains captain of Spain and has just helped inspire Valencia's remarkable championship progress. Along the way he has reached a record of 105 international caps.

Goalkeeper captains may be considered a good omen. Spain coach Javier Clemente, a fellow Basque, believes so. He says: "He's still one of the best keepers in the world. I have voted for him every year as the best in Europe and he's an excellent influence as a man."

Zubizarreta has one of the largest personal trophy cabinets in Spanish football. He won the championship in 1983 and 1984 with Bilbao, while with Barcelona he won his first European trophy the Cup-winners Cup, in 1989, as well title four years in a row from 1991 to 1994.

In 1992, Zubi was voted in as captain in succession to the retired Jose Ramon Alesanco – and was still captain when Milan ripped open his defensive cover.

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
ANDONI ZUBIZARRETA *Valencia* 34 yrs
JOSE CANIZARES *Real Madrid* 27 yrs
JOSE FRANCISCO MOLINA *Atletico Madrid* 25 yrs

DEFENDERS
ABELARDO *Barcelona* 26 yrs
MIGUEL ANGEL NADAL *Barcelona* 29 yrs
SERGI *Barcelona* 24 yrs
ALBERT FERRER *Barcelona* 25 yrs
RAFAEL ALKORTA *Real Madrid* 27 yrs
JORGE OTERO *Valencia* 33 yrs
ALBERTO BELSUE *Real Zaragoza* 28 yrs

MIDFIELDERS
GUILLERMO AMOR *Barcelona* 28 yrs
DONATO *Deportivo La Coruna* 33 yrs
JAVIER MANJARIN *Deportivo La Coruna* 26 yrs
FERNANDO HIERRO *Real Madrid* 28 yrs
LUIS ENRIQUE *Real Madrid* 26 yrs
JOSE LUIS CAMINERO *Atletico Madrid* 28 yrs
JULEN GUERRERO *Athletic Bilbao* 22 yrs

FORWARDS
JULIO SALINAS *Sporting Gijon* 33 yrs
FRANCISCO KIKO *Atletico Madrid* 24 yrs
ALFONSO *Real Betis* 23 yrs
JUAN ANTONIO PIZZI *Tenerife* 27 yrs
JOSE EMILIO AMAVISCA *Real Madrid* 24 yrs

PLAYER TO WATCH: Jose Luis Caminero

CAMINERO has been an admired force in the Spanish championship for years. It's his bad luck that the rest of the world has never had much chance to appreciate his skilful manipulation of attack.

Caminero's vision and elegance make him the natural heir to Michel, the veteran who was outstanding at the 1986 and 1990 World Cup finals. Like Michel, he began his career with Real Madrid and had to move to Valladolid and then to Atletico after finding his route to the first team at Bernabeu blocked by Michel.

This year, Atletico have been transformed into the most dynamic and aggressive team in the country, and Caminero is largely responsible. He has popped up to score at key moments, but he also has a tendency to lose his head as well when things go wrong. His sharp temperament cost him a suspension in the World Cup and a sending-off in Atletico's vital derby match with Real Madrid last November. But Spain and Atletico play well when Caminero is around. Coach Clemente hopes he is still doing that come June 30.

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Chest Sizes: 26/8, 30/2 £22.99
Chest Sizes: 34/6, 38/40, 42, 44, 46 £36.99
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Chest Sizes: 34/6, 38/40, 42, 44, 46 £36.99
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Chest Sizes: 34/6, 38/40, 42, 44, 46 £39.99
Italy (H/A)
Chest Sizes: 26/8, 30/2 £29.99
Chest Sizes: 32/4 £34.99
Chest Sizes: 34/6, 38/40, 42/4, 44/6 £39.99
Russia (H)
Chest Sizes: 34/6, 38/40, 42/4, 44/6, 50/2 £37.99

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Chest Sizes: 32/4, 34/6, 38/40, 42/4, 44/6 £39.99

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England (H/New A), Scotland (H/A/3rd)
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England (H/New A), Scotland (H/A/3rd)
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Long shots

Bob Vaughan on Dusan Uhrin's rank outsiders

IT HAS been a vintage year for Czech football, though not for Sparta Prague, the club which started out on top and whose players have been demoralised by the Slavia takeover, a factor national coach, the 'Good Bohemian Football Soldier' Uhrin, must take into account when he selects his final team for the tilts at the Italian, German and Russian giants in Group C.

Kouba & Co have been losing with Sparta, while Slavia have been winning and perhaps, even after such a successful qualifying campaign, there may be a need to change the wearer of the No 1 jersey.

Ladislav Maier has forced his way into the squad, despite only one cap in his 30 years, and will be challenging Kouba for what could be a busy 270 minutes in Group C. He may lack international experience but form is not unimportant and there could be a surprise choice. It will probably not be Srnicek, who ended out of favour at Newcastle as the Magpies' season slumped.

In front of the Czech custodian, whoever he proves to be, experimentation looks unlikely.

Last man Kadlec is back in his preferred position of sweeper after an unhappy season with German Cup Finalists Kaiserslautern, who struggled all season against relegation. 'Big Miro' played his part, unwillingly, for much of the Bundesliga campaign, as a defensive midfielder.

Jan Suchoparek has had injury problems but will be there to take his place alongside Kadlec, though both are being cagey about their future plans. That applies, too, to a third defender, Hapal. Will the English North-West be a summer passage to the Scottish Premier League for one or two of the trio?

That will hardly interest their national team manager for the moment. His team dealt with the Republic of Ireland at the Strahov but practice is not the real thing. Two further friendlies are planned, against old rivals Austria at Salzburg's Lehen and the Swiss in Basel. Presumably Messrs Jorge and Uhrin are aware the two nations could meet in the semi-finals.

The odds on the Czechs winning the trophy are 50-1 so perhaps it does not matter if *verrou* and *ceska ulice* meet, though they will hardly be using such ancient tactics this summer.

During the training camps, Uhrin has to sort the wheat from the chaff in midfield and attack. Frydek's place could be in doubt and there could be a return for the veteran Kubik, now back from not only Japan but also Third Division football after a move from Drnovice, a club 'doing a Czech Wimbledon'.

The in-form Kuka, striving to save Kaiserslautern and win the German Cup, is one certainty up front and the regular scoring of the veteran Drulak, enjoying a 1996 'Roman Spring' at the age of 34, looks to be bad news for the flamboyant Skuhravy. He rather shot himself in the foot by moving to Portugal, not making the grade there and returning to Italy to find he could not be suitably re-registered for the latter part of the Serie B campaign with Genoa. The one-time wonder boy from Geske Budejovice is doubtful even for a place on the bench, and may well be looking for pastures new this summer.

Supplying the bullets for Kuka and Drulak will be newly-crowned German 'Meister' Patrik Berger. Will his defence be too hard-pressed in its struggles with the imposing Germans, Italians and Russians to supply a possible tournament star with enough of the ball? Fans who want to see attacking football will hope not.

The Czechs surprised the Germans in pre- and post-World War Two final rounds of the World Cup and defeated them in the 1976 Belgrade Euro Final. Why not again . . . at 50-1?

The Czechs surprised the Germans in the 1976 European Championship Final in Belgrade. Why not again . . . at 50-1?

STAR MAN
Patrik Berger

HE IS the man who now makes Borussia Dortmund tick and they are Champions of the Bundesliga for the second time in a row.

His quick feet have made him the darling of Dortmund's Westfalenstadion, but before Dortmund prepare for next season's Champions League, Patrik has an appointment with Euro 96, where he will be a certain starter and coach Dusan Uhrin's premier playmaker.

It has been a fine start to his career in Germany, but internationally the Prague-born offensive midfielder, who has had spells with both Slavia and Sparta, remains relatively unknown.

Berger is nimble, good on the break and combines well with the more experienced Kuka and, if the Czechs do well, could blossom into one of the stars of the tournament. His problem is that he may be assisting at the rear too often for his liking.

As well as the Republic did in the qualifers, they have yet to encounter a team of real quality. The Dutch were below par when the vital away draw and home win were secured, but the opponents in Group C pose a far greater threat.

Berger now knows pressure after his first Bundesliga season, but some of his colleagues do not. His opportunities to go forward in possession may be limited but perhaps only a few will be needed to give Kuka and Drulak the chances they require.

PLAYER TO WATCH: Pavel Kuka

WHEN the RCS qualified for the 1990 World Cup, Pavel Kuka was just 21 years old. The great event came rather too soon. He had no chance. Skuhravy and Knoflicek got the nod as Jo Venglos' double strike force.

Since then, Kuka has had no international competition in which to show what he can do. The short striker has, however, made a name for himself in Germany since moving from Slavia Prague to Kaiserslautern in 1993. He has struck up an excellent understanding in the Bundesliga with Stefan Kuntz, subsequently Besiktas' gain and the Lauterers' loss.

Since Kuntz's move to Turkey the weight of goalscoring has fallen on Kuka's shoulders. His efforts have brought the relegation-threatened Red Devils a Cup Final place but to the last Bundesliga 2 has threatened. Whatever the outcome in League or Cup, Kuka will be there when Group C gets underway and the Czechs run out at Old Trafford on the second day of the finals.

If Berger can provide the bullets, Kuka and partner Drulak will be adding to their goal tally. Kuka's record is nearly one in every three matches in his 40 internationals. He has been in the squad for six years. Now is the time to come good with the wider football world watching.

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
PETR KOUBA *Sparta Prague* 27 yrs
PAVEL SRNICEK *Newcastle Utd (Eng)* 34 yrs
LADISLAV MAIER *Slovan Liberec* 30 yrs

DEFENDERS
RADOSLAV LATAL *Schalke (Ger)* 25 yrs
JAN SUCHOPAREK *Slavia Prague* 27 yrs
MIROSLAV KADLEC *Kaiserslautern (Ger)* 31 yrs
PAVEL HAPAL *Tenerife (Spa)* 26 yrs
THOMAS REPKA *Sparta Prague* 22 yrs
MICHAL HORNAK *Sparta Prague* 26 yrs
PETR GABRIEL *Viktoria Zizkov* 23 yrs
LUBOS KUBIK *Petra Drnovice* 32 yrs
VACLAV NEMECEK *Servette (Swi)* 29 yrs

MIDFIELDERS
MARTIN FRYDEK *Sparta Prague* 27 yrs
KAREL POBORSKY *Slavia Prague* 24 yrs
PAVEL NEDVED *Sparta Prague* 23 yrs
PATRIK BERGER *Borussia Dortmund (Ger)* 22 yrs
JIRI NEMEC *Schalke (Ger)* 30 yrs
RADEK BEJBL *Slavia Prague* 23 yrs

FORWARDS
PAVEL KUKA *Kaiserslautern (Ger)* 28 yrs
RADEK DRULAK *Petra Drnovice* 34 yrs
PETR SMICER *Hradec Kralova* 32 yrs
VRATISLAV LOKVENC *Sparta Prague* 20 yrs

Strength in depth

With a good mix of youth and experience, the Germans are again tournament favourites, says Arthur Rotmil

A SERIES of successful tests allowed Germany's manager Berti Vogts to name his squad of 22 much earlier than usual, four weeks before the start of the tournament.

A 2-0 home win over reigning European champions Denmark and away victories over Portugal (2-1) and Holland (1-0) have extended Germany's run to 11 matches without defeat; the series included 10 wins.

The success against Holland, strongly fancied in some quarters as potential champions, has apparently persuaded the British bookmakers to elevate the Germans to the status of favourites, but Vogts, never comfortable in that role, is not given to making rash predictions.

"We have done well in preparations and our strength has been tactical organisation and discipline. The team has grasped our new defensive system, the art of pressing has steadily improved and so has the closing of space. And when we attack it happens much more quickly and more automatically. But there is still more work to be done," the team boss declared. But he refused to be drawn on his team's chances.

The result in Rotterdam should not be overrated because the Dutch missed five regulars through injury; the Germans only had to replace Andy Moller. The German record looks impressive, but it must be noted that at that same point in time France had been undefeated in 20 games, Spain in 17 and Russia in 14.

Several positions in the German team are – barring injury – definitely booked. Goalkeeper Andreas Kopke demonstrated against Holland that he is the undisputed No 1. His save of a penalty and the follow-up from Bergkamp were world class. Matthias Sammer remains the designated 'libero', while other defenders like Jurgen Kohler, Stefan Reuter, Thomas Helmer and Christian Ziege are also certs.

In midfield Moller (if fit) and Thomas Hassler are the orchestrators, while Klinsmann is a 'banker' up front. However, the position of Klinsi's partner was contested by several candidates, who faced competition from an unexpected quarter.

'It is a long time since I have felt so positive. The potential is enormous' – Jurgen Klinsmann

The 27-year-old Oliver Bierhoff, from Italy's Udinese, was surprisingly called up against Portugal, did well and followed up with both goals in the win over Denmark. He is now expected to lead the German attack in the opening match against the Czech Republic for which Klinsmann is suspended – along with midfielder Steffen Freund.

Bierhoff's most likely partner is the veteran Stefan Kuntz, 33, who is one of the few left-footed forwards in the squad and he has already played with Bierhoff at Bayer Uerdingen.

Vogts, who was under fire following Germany's inglorious exit at the last World Cup, has recovered impressively. He has even improved on the playing record of his predecessor Beckenbauer, though Vogts is still pursuing his first trophy.

Only one defeat in 20 matches since USA 94 has convinced the public that he is the best man for the job and his standing since his appointment six years ago has never been higher. He has also impressed the critics with his single minded approach.

Despite a campaign launched by the newspaper *BILD* and supported by Beckenbauer to bring back Lothar Matthaus, the team chief resisted the clamour. "We simply can't afford to leave out our most experienced player," they claimed. But Vogts was not so much concerned about Matthaus' playing ability as his possible disruptive influence in the dressing room.

The dilemma was reminiscent of Vogts' earlier brushes with volatile players like Stefan Effenberg, Bodo Illgner and Thomas Berthold, whom he had also overlooked when their behaviour was creating tensions within the squad. Eventually it was Matthaus himself who solved the embarrassing problem by 'retiring' from the national side due to injury. Vogts continued to warn the public not to expect the Euro title: "German football is not healthy," he opined. "We have big problems and everybody knows it, but nobody wants to listen."

But his captain Klinsmann is more optimistic: "I look at our squad and find that we are practising an aggressive system which suits everybody. If I knew of one player who doesn't pull his weight, then I would have big doubts whether we can succeed. But it is a long time since I have felt so positive as now. The potential is enormous."

STAR MAN
Jurgen Klinsmann

THEY say that one man doesn't make a team, but the fact remains that Jurgen Klinsmann's lethal finishing is the principal reason why Germany are being touted as European Championship favourites.

Thirty five goals in 82 internationals is an exceptional strike-rate in modern football. Just as priceless is his experience of having played at the top in four different countries: Germany, Italy, France and England.

Klinsmann's acrobatic volleys, bicycle kicks and thundering headers are reminiscent of another great German goal ace Uwe Seeler, though they are physically quite different. Klinsmann acquired his athletic prowess from having been a gymnast and volleyball player in his youth.

He has won just about everything – as well as the World Cup, the UEFA Cup, he was voted German Footballer of the Year twice and collected the English equivalent in 1995.

Now Klinsmann is the national team's captain – a marvellous career for a boy who learned the trade of a baker in his parents' business near Stuttgart.

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
OLIVER KAHN *Bayern Munich* 26 yrs
ANDREAS KOPKE *Eintracht Frankfurt* 34 yrs
OLIVER RECK *Werder Bremen* 31 yrs

DEFENDERS
MARCUS BABBEL *Bayern Munich* 23 yrs
THOMAS HELMER *Bayern Munich* 31 yrs
JURGEN KOHLER *Borussia Dortmund* 30 yrs
STEFAN REUTER *Borussia Dortmund* 29 yrs
MATTHIAS SAMMER *Borussia Dortmund* 28 yrs
RENE SCHNEIDER *Hansa Rostock* 23 yrs

MIDFIELDERS
MARIO BASLER *Werder Bremen 28 yrs*
MARCO BODE *Werder Bremen* 26 yrs
DIETER EILTS *Werder Bremen* 31 yrs
STEFFEN FREUND *Borussia Dortmund* 26 yrs
THOMAS HASSLER *Karlsruhe* 30 yrs
ANDY MOLLER *Borussia Dortmund* 28 yrs
MEHMET SCHOLL *Bayern Munich* 25 yrs
THOMAS STRUNZ *Bayern Munich* 28 yrs
CHRISTIAN ZIEGE *Bayern Munich* 24 yrs

FORWARDS
OLIVER BIERHOFF *Udinese (Ita)* 28 yrs
FREDI BOBIC *VfB Stuttgart* 24 yrs
JURGEN KLINSMANN *Bayern Munich* 31 yrs
STEFAN KUNTZ *Besiktas (Tur)* 33 yrs

PLAYER TO WATCH: OLIVER BIERHOFF

THEY call him 'the forgotten exile', but striker Oliver Bierhoff, who made a remarkable late leap into the national squad in time for the European Championships, doesn't mind a bit.

The only German playing in Italy made his name abroad after his talent was not recognised at home. This, despite 22 caps at Under-18, Under-19 and Under-21 level.

His 23 goals in 32 games for Casino Salzburg provided a launch pad for Italian soccer with Ascoli, where he became top scorer in Serie B in 1993. Now at Udinese in Serie A, the goals are flowing just the same.

National team manager Berti Vogts gave Bierhoff the chance in February against Portugal. In the next outing he scored both goals in a 2-0 win over Denmark. He is earmarked to partner the great Klinsmann and if he does well he may well realise his dream and get a contract at Juventus.

The Chiesa question

Will Sacchi gamble on the man in form? Paddy Agnew reports

ON THE first day of Italy's Euro 96 training camp at the Milan training ground of Milanello, a journalist from Italian state radio, *RAI*, approached coach Arrigo Sacchi and asked the big question: "Do you intend to follow the advice of the 55 million potential Italian team coaches out there and pick Enrico Chiesa for your team at the European Championship?"

To play or not to play Chiesa, that is the question. The international soccer community may have been stunned to read that Sacchi had omitted such as Roberto Baggio, Gianluca Vialli and Giuseppe Signori from his squad for England but a majority of Italians were more relieved to note that he had included the uncapped Chiesa. In truth, Sacchi's squad for Euro 96 contained no major surprises.

This column has regularly pointed out that Roberto Baggio's indifferent form this season with Milan made him anything but a certain starter for England. We have also recorded at some length the mutual fear and loathing between Sacchi and Vialli. So it was eminently predictable that Sacchi would opt to leave out the two most famous names in contemporary Italian soccer.

So predictable that Sacchi could only adopt a weary tone when asked about their omission, saying: "My assessment of Baggio was based on his fitness and performance throughout this season's league campaign. As for Vialli, too much has been written and said on the subject. All I'll say now is that we registered the fact that he excluded himself from the team a long time ago."

In truth, Sacchi's squad for Euro 96 contained no major surprises

When he came to dealing with the omission of Lazio's Giuseppe Signori, who was this season's joint leading Serie A scorer with Igor Protti of Bari, and has been leading goalscorer three times in the past four seasons, Sacchi adopted a more conciliatory tone.

"Many players I respect and admire are not included in this list," he said. "But I've had to settle for players who can guarantee me the type of total soccer I want . . ."

For 'total soccer' read 'Sacchi soccer'. As predicted, Sacchi has picked a squad largely based on that group of players who won qualification for Euro 96. Only the probable reserves, midfielder Diego Fuser and right-back Moreno Torricelli, and this season's *enfant prodigue*, Chiesa, have come in from the cold.

Given his squad selection, one might be tempted to conclude that Sacchi is approaching Euro 96 in an uncharacteristically resolute frame of mind. All doubts dispelled, Sacchi sets sail for England?

Not quite so. Reliable sources suggest that in the days before naming his squad, Sacchi attempted to persuade Milan's 36-year-old living legend, Franco Baresi, to come out of an international retirement begun on the day of the 1994 World Cup Final. Baresi said thanks, but no.

During those same days, in an interview in the Roman daily, *Il Tempo*, Sacchi even appeared to make conciliatory noises in Vialli's direction.

Furthermore, there is the incontrovertible fact that among the 22 for England, there is the familiar name of 32-year-old Roberto Donadoni, ex-Milan and a current New York MetroStar. He had been about to pack his bags for a summer in the Major Soccer League when he received a phone call from Sacchi asking him to leave himself free for June.

Donadoni recalled, Baresi contacted, Vialli honourably mentioned in despatches – what does it all mean? Is Sacchi about to fall prey to a dose of his all too familiar Hamletian doubt? Has he lost confidence in first-choice central defenders Luigi Apolloni and Alessandro Costacurta? Is he worried about Fabrizio Ravanelli's fitness? Is he not sure that Angelo Di Livio, Roberto Di Matteo and Antonio Conte can do a job for him in midfield?

Perhaps too much need not be read into the Donadoni-Baresi stories. Donadoni's excellent form this season with Milan meant that his last-minute selection came as no surprise. He is experienced and familiar with Sacchi's ways as few players are, and will be an invaluable squad (and probably team) member in England. As for Baresi, well it was worth the try.

One suspects that, despite the phone calls, Sacchi's team is already decided. Angelo Peruzzi in goal, Ciro Ferrara, Apolloni, Costacurta, Paolo Maldini in defence, Donadoni, Di Matteo, Demetrio Albertini in midfield and Zola along with either Fabrizio Ravanelli or Alessandro Del Piero in attack will surely prove to be the formation which at least starts the tournament (v Russia, June 11).

The above formation, of course, leaves one burning issue unresolved – Chiesa. Will Sacchi gamble on the League's most in-form goalscorer, despite his international inexperience, bringing him in at the expense of either Del Piero or Ravanelli? If Sacchi takes the gamble, several Italian commentators believe that the move might be enough to see Italy go on to win Euro 96. We have our doubts.

What is sure is that this squad are likely to perform in a manner similar to that seen at USA 94 – never elegant, rarely spectacular but capable of riding its luck for a long way.

STAR MAN
Alessandro Del Piero

ASKED by *WORLD SOCCER* to name some players who might prove major surprises at Euro 96, Arrigo Sacchi said: "Del Piero, I hope". To a wider international audience, Del Piero might come as a surprise but to those who follow Italian soccer closely, the little Juventus playmaker is no surprise.

He was one of those who made a telling contribution to the League title success of last season, proving so effective that the newly crowned champions did not think twice about offloading Roberto Baggio to Milan, confident that they had cover in the shape of Del Piero.

He is immensely skilful, with a devastating ability to get past defenders as well as being handy with a free-kick, and he appears to have all the attributes to live up to Sacchi's hopes. Only doubts about his freshness at the end of a busy season cloud his prospects.

PLAYER TO WATCH: Enrico Chiesa

SCORER of 22 goals this season and revelation of the year, equipped with explosive pace, able to hit 30-yard, top-corner 'sizzlers' with either foot and equally effective as a wide man or as a central striker; Enrico Chiesa could be poised to join the hallowed tradition of last minute Italian dark horses such as Paolo Rossi and 'Toto' Schillaci.

Lest anyone has any doubts about Chiesa's claims on an Italian shirt, he recently received an untypical stamp of approval from no less an authority than Fabio Capello. After watching Chiesa score two goals against his title-winning side in a 3-0 defeat, Capello commented: "Chiesa is a real talent and I suspect he will be the big surprise of the Championship. Just at the moment, there isn't a better striker around."

Parma recently put down the money where others have been laying on the hype when agreeing to buy him from Sampdoria for £9.5m, while offering him a five-year contract worth an annual £1m after tax.

Italy expects. If Sacchi picks him.

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
LUCA BUCCI *Parma* 27 yrs
ANGELO PERUZZI *Juventus* 26 yrs
FRANCESCO TOLDO *Fiorentina* 24 yrs

DEFENDERS
ALESSANDRO COSTACURTA *Milan* 30 yrs
PAOLO MALDINI *Milan* 27 yrs
CIRO FERRARA *Juventus* 29 yrs
MORENO TORRICELLI *Juventus* 25 yrs
AMEDO CARBONI *AS Roma* 31 yrs
ROBERTO MUSSI *Parma* 32 yrs
LUIGI APOLLONI *Parma* 29 yrs

MIDFIELDERS
DEMETRIO ALBERTINI *Milan* 24 yrs
DINO BAGGIO *Parma* 24 yrs
ANTONIO CONTE *Juventus* 26 yrs
ALESSANDRO DEL PIERO *Juventus* 21 yrs
ANGELO DI LIVIO *Juventus* 29 yrs
ROBERTO DI MATTEO *Lazio* 26 yrs
ROBERTO DONADONI *New York MetroStars (USA)* 32 yrs
DIEGO FUSER *Lazio* 27 yrs

FORWARDS
GIANFRANCO ZOLA *Parma* 29 yrs
ENRICO CHIESA *Sampdoria* 26 yrs
FABRIZIO RAVANELLI *Juventus* 27 yrs
PIERLUIGI CASIRAGHI *Lazio* 27 yrs

No case for the defence

Injuries have hit the Russians hard, says Victor Gusev

WITH Euro 96 a matter of weeks away, coach Oleg Romantsev found himself deprived of the services of key defenders. Serious injuries to Dmitri Khlestov and Ramiz Mamedov, both of Moscow Spartak, has left Romantsev with few options in defence.

The coach immediately summoned the versatile Evgeni Bushmanov, who is doing a great job for CSKA Moscow, but clearly lacks international experience.

The manager also had to put personal differences aside and call up Dmitri Popov of Racing Santander, who had "betrayed" Romantsev, then coach of Moscow Spartak, by leaving the club. Ironically, Popov was injured during a practice session and will now miss the tournament.

As a last resort, Romantsev called up Vasili Kulkov. Kulkov had to be accompanied by his best friend, Sergei Yuran. Both players left Spartak last year for English side Millwall and were strongly criticised at the time by the then coach . . . Oleg Romantsev.

It had looked as if the international career of Sergei Gorlukovic, the 34-year-old veteran now with Moscow Spartak, was over. But with so many players missing, the player who was part of the national squad under two previous managers, is back in the frame again. It is further proof of Russia's lack of experienced defenders.

Another last-minute returnee was Igor Dobrovolski. The player who had tried seven teams in six different countries in recent years was warned by Romantsev in March that he had to find himself a club and start training in order to be eligible for the Euro 96 draft.

Dobrovolski announced he was quitting football to become . . . a sausage factory owner in Switzerland. However, Igor, one of the key figures behind the boycott of USA 94 by leading Russian players, changed his mind, started training with CSKA in May and proved that he was still in good shape.

While defence remains the team's biggest problem, according to Romantsev, the goalkeepers are the only position he does not have to worry about. Foreign-based Stanislav Cherchesov and Dmitri Kharine look good for their clubs and both did a competent job in Russia's recent friendlies.

A top four place would be a great success but nobody would blame the team for losing in the quarter-finals

Goalkeeper number three is Moscow Lokomotiv's Sergei Ovchinnikov, but Romantsev has said that he might drop him in favour of another defender.

In midfield, Romantsev's only serious loss has been the former Spartak playmaker Igor Lediakhov. Now playing for Spanish side Sporting Gijon, he had missed Russia's recent friendlies for family reasons, but was ready to join the team for Euro 96. Lediakhov scored twice in Sporting's recent game with Compostela but was seriously injured with 10 minutes to go.

Elsewhere, Udinese's Igor Shalimov may not be the player he used to be, but he still commands respect from other players and is unlikely to be dropped.

Attack will be Russia's biggest strength, although the team failed to score in a recent friendly in Belgium. While Kulkov would look like a good addition to the defence, his fellow Yuran might not be needed when there are accomplished forwards in Kiriakov, Kolyvanov and Radchenko to call on.

The players' biggest aim will be to overcome the national scepticism regarding their capabilities. Most of Russia's top footballers are now earning their money abroad. However, few play for big clubs, while those that do spend most of their time on the bench.

Victories in friendlies have kept Russia high in the FIFA world rankings. But the standard of play in the domestic championship leaves much to be desired. This has forced Romantsev's hand and he has turned to his foreign-based players. By doing so, some critics allege, he has failed to spot talent at home.

Unlike the Euro 96 qualifying groups, when they finished as comfortable group winners, the finals draw was not kind to Russia. The Czech team look like very strong opponents, not to mention the German and the Italian squads.

In 1964 national team manager Konstantin Beskov was fired for failing to beat Spain in the final. However, a place among the top four would be considered a great success today. But nobody here would blame the team for losing in the quarter-finals.

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
STANISLAV CHERCHESOV *FC Tirol (Aus)* 32 yrs
DMITRI KHARINE *Chelsea (Eng)* 27 yrs
SERGEI OVCHINNIKOV *Moscow Lokomotiv* 25 yrs

DEFENDERS
YURI NIKIFOROV *Moscow Spartak* 25 yrs
VICTOR ONOPKO *Real Oviedo (Spa)* 26 yrs
YURI KOVTUN *Moscow Dinamo* 26 yrs
OMARI TETRADZE *Alaniya Vladikavkaz* 26 yrs
EVGENI BUSHMANOV *CSKA Moscow* 24 yrs
SERGEI GORLUKOVIC *Moscow Spartak* 34 yrs

MIDFIELDERS
ANDREI KANCHELSKIS *Everton (Eng)* 27 yrs
VALERI KARPIN *Real Sociedad (Spa)* 27 yrs
ALEXANDER MOSTOVOI *Strasbourg (Fra)* 27 yrs
ILIA TSYMBALAR *Moscow Spartak* 27 yrs
VLADISLAV RADIMOV *CSKA Moscow* 20 yrs
IGOR SHALIMOV *Udinese (Ita)* 27 yrs
IGOR YANOVSKI *Alaniya Vladikavkaz* 21 yrs
IGOR DOBROVOLSKI *Moscow Dinamo* 28 yrs

FORWARDS
IGOR KOLYVANOV *Foggia (Ita)* 25 yrs
SERGEI KIRIAKOV *Karlsruhe (Ger)* 26 yrs
VLADIMIR BESCHASTNIKH *Werder Bremen (Ger)* 22 yrs
DMITRI RADCHENKO *La Coruna (Spa)* 25 yrs
IGOR SIMUTENKOV *Reggiana (Ita)* 23 yrs

STAR MAN
VICTOR ONOPKO

IRRESPECTIVE of what critics say about Victor Onopko's move to mid-table Real Oviedo in Spain, he is still regarded as the star of the Russian national squad.

The captain proved it once again in a recent friendly against Belgium, when he not only started most of Russia's attacks, but also saved the team in a few critical situations in his own penalty area.

Onopko left Moscow Spartak in the middle of their successful Champions League campaign in December 1995, quoting the living conditions in Russia as the main reason for his departure. Shortly before he left he had had his fancy car stolen from outside his Moscow apartment.

Before the deal with Oviedo was done, a number of big Western European clubs showed interest in the balding Russian star, who allegedly lost his hair as a consequence of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. Eintracht Frankfurt, Newcastle, Everton and Atletico Madrid were mentioned.

Victor, Russian Footballer of the Year in 1992 and 1993, is equally good in defence or midfield and is noted for his great stamina; he has carried on playing in Spain after completing a long season in Russia. Heading is also one of his trump cards, which is rather unusual for a Russian footballer.

PLAYER TO WATCH: VLADISLAV RADIMOV

MIDFIELDER Vladislav Radimov is both the most talented young player and the 'enfant terrible' of Russian soccer. His 15 assists in the national championship last year were accompanied by a multitude of yellow and some red cards, the result of a terrible temper.

At 20 he is the leading player at CSKA Moscow, where he has been guided by one of the national team's coaches, Alexander Tarkhanov. Skilful and tactically minded, he often looks like an alien, a stranger, in today's Russian soccer. He plays good ice hockey too and might well have become a star in that sport if it had not been for soccer.

An Under-21 and youth international, he made his senior international debut at 18 and was impressive in Russia's pre-Euro 96 games. If he adds some confidence to his skills, he may well become one of the big surprises of June 96.

Beware bandwagons!

Zdravko Reic on the pride, the passion and the pressure

THE CROATIANS prepared for Euro 96 with a string of results which, on paper, look impressive. However, after such a strong performance in their qualifying group, has too much been expected of the tournament dark horses too soon?

They beat Poland (2-1), South Korea (3-0), Israel (2-0) and Hungary (4-1) and drew 0-0 with England at Wembley. These results helped them to climb from 43 to 28 in the FIFA world rankings.

The fact that only Turkey, of the teams that will compete in England, have a lower ranking (30) has not dented the optimists in Croatia, least of all national team manager Miroslav Blazevic.

"We are the best, although we haven't shown everything we can. We will explode in England, though, and prove our worth."

Blazevic, however, no longer insists that his commandos, as he likes to refer to them, will be crowned European Champions on June 30, but he hasn't given up entirely on his dream of Croatia causing a sensation at Euro 96.

'We will explode in England and prove our worth' – national coach Miroslav Blazevic

The manager, who is also a reserve army major and will be promoted to the rank of colonel if he succeeds in England, believes Portugal will join Croatia in the quarter-finals from Group D.

"I'm not scared of anyone," says Blazevic. "But you have to be cautious, particularly at the start of the competition. We need a victory against Turkey, it doesn't matter what kind of victory. After that, we will be flying.

"When we reach the quarter-final, half the job will be done. We are strongest in a knock-out competition. Why? I always win when the other way out is to lose."

Despite the manager's confidence, very few were happy with the performance at Wembley. The Croatian press was particularly critical. The team went home unbeaten thanks to a large slice of luck and a great performance from goalkeeper Marijan Mrmic.

Blazevic did not think his team were lucky against England, but admitted that reserve keeper Mrmic had an extraordinary night.

"It was the most difficult test in the history of Croatian soccer and we arrived totally unprepared," he says. "When we go through proper preparations, we will be at least 30 per cent stronger."

Not many of the national side have been playing regularly for their clubs. Boban had been sick for two months; Boksic was out for five matches with injury; Prosinecki has not been getting on well with coach Johan Cruyff; Davor Suker has been preoccupied with his move from Sevilla to Real Madrid; and Robert Jarni has also had problems with injuries.

The best players were the 'Englishmen' – Igor Stimac and Slaven Bilic. Goran Vlaovic did well too.

The Wembley performance moved Tomislav Ivic, the former national coach who left last year, to launch a stinging attack on Blazevic and the national side.

He warned: "The England match proved once again that the job with the national team has not been done well. I am afraid that Euro 96 could turn out to be a disaster for Croats. My only hope is in the character of the players and their ability to be at their best when it is most important."

There is no love lost between Blazevic and Ivic. Relations took a turn for the worse recently when Ivic, now in charge of the United Arab Emirates, announced he was donating half of the prize money he received for the qualifying campaign – around £55,000 – to the children of soldiers killed in the war in Croatia.

Blazevic responded by calling on the Croatian FA to "protect him from Ivic's attacks". The FA published a statement saying that "Ivic doesn't have to tell us how to help the children of the fallen heroes of Croatia".

Life is not easy for Blazevic now. He has set himself a trap by promising "guaranteed success" in England. If his dreams don't come true, he will be forced to resign.

Much will depend on the team's final preparations, which will be held in Porec on the beautiful Istra peninsula, once a summer holiday resort popular with wealthy Italians.

The players are starting to feel the pressure as well. Much is expected of Davor Suker, the top scorer. Now the public expects the earth from him and the other players. But it will not be easy. Even so, Blazevic insists that "the road to success for Croatia is assured".

"During the qualifying matches everyone playing for the national team showed great spirit and true patriotism," says inspirational captain Zvonimir Boban.

"We were able to play that way when we had to play only one match a month. But now, with three matches in 10 days against three different opponents we have not played before, the story is going to be very different.

"Everyone in England is hungry for success. But you can't count on beating those guys just with great team spirit. That's why preparations in Porec are extremely important."

The match between Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina, scheduled for May 22 in Sarajevo, was cancelled at the request of the Croatians, who wanted more time to prepare for the trip to England.

STAR MAN
Davor Suker

WITHOUT DOUBT, Davor Suker is Croatia's most valuable player. No wonder – he has scored 17 goals in 16 internationals. Of his colleagues, Goran Vlaovic comes closest, with four.

During the qualifying games for Euro 96, Suker scored 12 times in 10 matches and deserves most credit for booking the Croats' tickets to England.

Suker recently played his last game for Sevilla in Spain. He scored 73 goals in three seasons, but left for Real Madrid in a £3million deal.

"The national team have already achieved a great deal by reaching Euro 96. Every next step, every win in England will be a real triumph. The most difficult opponents will be Portugal, while I'm personally concerned about our match with Denmark.

"Turkey are the only outsiders in the group, but you have to be particularly careful about playing such teams. They have nothing to lose. They can only gain from playing against the favourites."

PLAYER TO WATCH: Alen Boksic

THE BIGGEST disappointment for Croatia in their brief history has been Alen Boksic. He has scored only once, ironically against Estonia, when scoring was not a problem – Croatia won 7-1.

"Maybe it is my fault that I am not an egotist," he says. "I prefer to serve someone else than to score myself. But, I admit, I owe a lot as far as scoring goes."

Boksic is still a very dangerous, skilful attacker who often gets marked by two defenders, a big reason why his team-mates get more space, and why Suker has scored so often.

Boksic won the Croatian Cup with Hajduk Split in 1991 and played for Marseille when the French side won the Champions Cup in 1993.

For the last three seasons Boksic has played in Rome for Lazio, but will line up for Juventus next season. "I could have stayed in Rome," he says. "I would have made more money. But I want to improve my game, my overall play. Juventus is the perfect place to do that. But I have to prove myself in England first."

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
DRAZEN LADIC *Croatia Zagreb* 33 yrs
TONCI GABRIC *Hajduk Split* 35 yrs
MARIJAN MRMIC *Varteks Varazdin* 31 yrs

DEFENDERS
IGOR STIMAC *Derby County (Eng)* 28 yrs
SLAVEN BILIC *West Ham (Eng)* 27 yrs
NIKOLA JERKAN *Real Oviedo (Spa)* 31 yrs
ZVONIMIR SOLDO *Croatia Zagreb* 28 yrs
DUBRAVKO PAVLICIC *Hercules (Spa)* 28 yrs
DARIO SIMIC *Croatia Zagreb* 20 yrs

MIDFIELDERS
NIKOLA JURCEVIC *Freiburg (Ger)* 29 yrs
ROBERT JARNI *Real Betis (Spa)* 27 yrs
ZVONIMIR BOBAN *Milan (Ita)* 27 yrs
ROBERT PROSINECKI *Barcelona (Spa)* 27 yrs
MLADEN MLADENOVIC *Gamba Osaka (Jap)* 31 yrs
NENAD PRALIJA *Hajduk Split* 25 yrs
IVICA MORNAR *Eintracht Frankfurt (Ger)* 22 yrs
ALJOSA ASANOVIC *Hajduk Split* 30 yrs

FORWARDS
DAVOR SUKER *Sevilla (Spa)* 28 yrs
ALEN BOKSIC *Lazio (Ita)* 26 yrs
GORAN VLAOVIC *Padova (Ita)* 23 yrs
MARIO STANIC *Club Brugge (Bel)* 24 yrs
IGOR CVITANOVIC *Croatia Zagreb* 25 yrs

Roligan roulette

Lightning is unlikely to strike twice, says Jim Holden

DENMARK's crushing 2-0 defeat of fellow Euro 96 finalists Scotland in April has fuelled the football fever which engulfs this small country whenever they qualify for a major tournament. The red and white colours of the national flag seem to adorn every shopfront and every street corner.

Expectation has weighed heavy in the past, particularly in the 1986 World Cup, when perhaps the most dazzling Danish side of all time blew up spectacularly against Spain after the famous 6-1 hammering of Uruguay.

Perhaps it was no coincidence that the fairytale triumph of the 1992 European Championships occurred after Denmark had been admitted as extremely late entrants following Yugoslavia's expulsion. Merely taking part was a huge bonus four years ago. No-one had any hope of winning the tournament, and there was certainly no pressure to deliver glory.

In England this summer, an army of travelling fans – the peaceful Roligans – will invade the old Danelaw territories once again. As defending champions, Denmark will be expected to reach at least the knock-out stages, even though they face a tough group, with matches against Portugal, Croatia and Turkey. It could be too heavy a burden.

Yet there is cause for genuine optimism that Richard Moller Nielsen's team can prove one of the successes of Euro 96. There are important survivors of the 1992 triumph – players who know how to win and what it feels like to be winners.

Goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel provides tremendous security, while the brilliant Laudrup brothers, Michael and Brian, have the world-class talent to change a game with a moment of genius. It was perhaps significant that both scored in that match against Scotland in the Copenhagen Parken.

Michael Laudrup's performances as captain will be crucial. He missed 1992 because of a foolish dispute with Moller Nielsen over style and tactics, criticising the approach for being too defensive. In fact, the 'contra' counter-attacking philosophy worked admirably for the side. Their ability to soak up pressure and then break with devastating effect was shown particularly in the 1992 semi-final against Holland.

The elder Laudrup also carries vivid memories of the 1986 World Cup failure, and he will be determined to leave his imprint on a major soccer tournament before leaving Real Madrid for Japan's J.League in the autumn.

They will be expected to reach at least the knockout stages . . . it could prove too heavy a burden

Of course, three players, however good, don't make a team. Many questions remain over how the other less experienced players will measure up on the big stage.

Can Erik Bo Andersen continue his prolific club scoring with both Aab Aalborg and Glasgow Rangers? Can Thomas Helveg and Jacob Laursen perform in the wing-back roles crucial to the 3-5-2 system employed by Moller Nielsen?

Can defenders Marc Rieper, Jes Hogh and Jens Risager rise to the occasion the way the 1992 defenders did? Will young talents like Allan Nielsen and Jon Dahl Tomasson, the 18-year-old who recently turned down a move to Ajax, flourish if they are given a chance to play?

These are all vital unknowns upon which Denmark's fortunes will rest. One thing, however, is for certain – under Moller Nielsen Denmark will play with a team spirit to match any of the other 15 nations. It is epitomised more than anyone by Brondby skipper Kim Vilfort, who scored the second clinching goal in the 1992 success.

The tough, classy 33-year-old played through that tournament with worries about his critically-ill daughter, and with 74 caps has been the backbone of the national side for eight years. Vilfort scored five goals from midfield in the qualifiers, and a recent leg injury playing for Brondby should hopefully have cleared up in time for the tournament. His loss would be enormous, especially as another veteran of 1992, John Jensen, has already probably been ruled out by injury.

In a tournament as open as any of the past 20 years, the possibilities for Denmark are unlimited. History means no-one can write them off as potential winners, but they could just as easily finish bottom of their group without a win as they did in the 1988 finals in Germany.

The first match against the talented but untried Portuguese may well determine Denmark's fate. A good start could create a momentum to take them into the latter stages of the competition, from where anything can happen. Defeat might bring the burden of expectation down on their shoulders in front of what will be a huge red and white following at Hillsborough.

STAR MAN
Peter Schmeichel

MANCHESTER UNITED's Peter Schmeichel is rated by many experts as the best goalkeeper in the world after years of success at Old Trafford and his fabulous performances in the 1992 European Championships for his country.

There are certainly few more imposing characters in the global game, his huge blond presence complemented by the angriest, loudest voice on the pitch when berating defenders. He can be a fearsome sight to both friend and foe.

If Denmark are to come anywhere near repeating their unlikely triumph of four years ago Schmeichel will have to be in the kind of form which frustrated so many strikers in the English Premiership as he helped United to win their double Double.

The giant keeper is superb at standing up one-on-one against advancing opponents, and is rarely beaten from long range or free-kicks – a vital factor at the highest level. His awesome long throws out from the penalty area can also be the springboard for Denmark's speedy counter-attacks.

Schmeichel's career began with Hvidovre back home, and after a fine spell at Brondby, the highlight of which was reaching the 1991 UEFA Cup semi-finals, he joined United for what now seems a paltry £750,000 in the summer of 1991.

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
PETER SCHMEICHEL *Manchester United (Eng)* 32 yrs
LARS HOGH *OB Odense* 37 yrs
MOGENS KROGH *Brondby* 32 yrs
DEFENDERS
THOMAS HELVEG *Udinese (Ita)* 24 yrs
JES HOGH *Fenerbahce (Tur)* 30 yrs
JACOB LAURSEN *Silkeborg* 24 yrs
LARS OLSEN *Brondby* 25 yrs
TORBEN PIECHNIK *AGF Aarhus* 33 yrs
MARC RIEPER *West Ham Utd (Eng)* 27 yrs
JENS RISAGER *Brondby* 25 yrs
MIDFIELDERS
HENRIK LARSEN *Lyngby* 30 yrs
MICHAEL LAUDRUP *Real Madrid (Spa)* 31 yrs
ALLAN NIELSEN *Brondby* 25 yrs
MICHAEL SCHJONBERG *OB Odense* 25 yrs
BRIAN STEEN NIELSEN *OB Odense* 27 yrs
CLAUS THOMSEN *Ipswich Town (Eng)* 26 yrs
KIM VILFORT *Brondby* 33 yrs
JON DAHL TOMASSON *Heerenveen (Hol)* 18 yrs
FORWARDS
BRIAN LAUDRUP *Rangers (Sco)* 27 yrs
ERIK BO ANDERSEN *Rangers (Sco)* 25 yrs
MIKKEL BECK *Fortuna Koln (Ger)* 23 yrs
PETER RASMUSSEN *Aab Aalborg* 29 yrs

PLAYER TO WATCH: Allan Nielsen

BRONDBY's 25-year-old midfielder Allan Nielsen has the potential to earn himself a lucrative transfer to a major continental club in Euro 96. A spell at Bayern Munich as a teenager didn't work out, but he has blossomed in the professional environment created at Brondby.

Nielsen scored perhaps the quickest ever international debut goal, just 60 seconds after his introduction as a substitute in the Euro 96 qualifier against Armenia. He may start the tournament on the bench again, although an impressive performance in a warm-up match against Scotland has improved his stock.

The midfielder was the star of Brondby's UEFA Cup triumph at Anfield last year, and his absence through suspension in the next round against AS Roma proved crucial.

He can play either in central midfield or wide on the flank, and is particularly dangerous linking up the kind of counter-attacking style that the Danish national side employs.

The road to recovery

Alberto Da Silva foresees the youth plan bearing fruit

THE PORTUGUESE stand a reasonable chance of impressing in England and of going back home having achieved some good results. Euro 96 is happening at a time when the most promising players are in top form and mentally prepared.

England is the best stage the Portuguese could ever hope for. The crowds should be friendly – after all, the two countries are the oldest allies in Europe – and the Portuguese players will feel as relaxed as British tourists do when on holiday in Portugal.

STAR MAN
Joao Pinto

PEOPLE used to call him Joao Vieira Pinto to distinguish him from the veteran full-back and Porto captain, Joao Pinto, who is now retiring.

Benfica forward Pinto is still a young man, but full of experience, and the only one ever to have won two World Youth Cups.

He comes from Northern Portugal and started his career at Boavista, where his qualities soon began to show through. Atletico Madrid were attracted by him and then bought him, only to send him on loan to a subsidiary club, Madrileno. This situation was not good enough for a man like Joao Pinto and he decided to go back to Portugal, where Boavista negotiated his transfer to the great Benfica.

He has made history there, especially in 1993-94, when he scored three goals against rivals Sporting to secure the championship – and begin Benfica's recovery from the brink of bankruptcy.

Two years ago, Liverpool showed interest in him and their manager, Roy Evans, went to Dublin to watch him playing for Portugal against the Republic of Ireland. But a week later Joao Pinto was injured in a game against Sporting and was sidelined for four months. Liverpool, in the meantime, looked elsewhere.

Now Pinto is fully fit and in splendid form, as we should see at Euro 96.

At some point Portugal may even have to face the hosts, and it would be a pleasure to see a repeat of the 1966 World Cup semi-final. Now, 30 years after that great event, both nations can expect an eventful tournament.

Nottingham and Sheffield will be the cradle of our ambitions and we have little doubt that those venues will see a promising start to Euro 96. If that happens, both cities will be for ever in the heart of the Portuguese people.

Of course the opposition must be taken into account. But we trust in the men who have so much quality.

Portuguese football is seeing a big recovery. Just a few years ago, even the great clubs – Benfica, Sporting and Porto – had only a few players of true class. The framework in which our football was evolving was weak. There were some scandals, and the best players always wanted to go and play abroad. With all that going on, how could we reorganise?

The national coach of the time, Carlos Quieroz, ensured that we would have a plan for the future and would draw on the qualities of the youngsters. Due to his work, we started a "factory" of young players and the result will be seen by all in Euro 96.

Where did they all come from – men such as Rui Costa, Figo, Nelson, Paulo Sousa, Capucho, Porfirio, and others? Even a couple of weeks before Euro 96, the Portuguese were collecting more international silverware, with another victory in the Under-16 European Championships in Vienna.

There is guarded optimism in Lisbon and in the country as a whole. The names of an initial group of 30 players have been disclosed and after the Portuguese Cup Final, the successful 22 were named by the national coach, Antonio Oliveira.

Oliveira is a realistic man. He has no truck with sentiment

Then all sorts of speculation will begin about who will be in the first 11 and about how they will play.

For the players of champions FC Porto, life is the least uncertain. There are no major injuries which might have prevented any of the main players from going to England. Everything seems to be in place. And some out of date 'stars' like Futre and Rui Barros were told that their time was up. They won't make it to England nor will Jorge Costa of Porto, injured when playing at the Stadium of Light against Benfica. He played at Wembley in December, when Portugal drew with England, but never showed the class of some of his colleagues.

Former Benfica goalkeeper Neno was pretty disillusioned at not having made it into the initial 30. But Oliveira said that he would be the fifth goalkeeper if picked. The team, obviously, do not need so many players in that position.

Oliveira is a realistic man. He has no truck with sentiment and could not care less about the previous international careers of some players. Futre was a great footballer, of course. So was Rui Barros. But they're now surplus to requirements.

The best Portuguese players of the season were Domingos (Porto) and Joao Pinto (Benfica). They were also the best strikers, with 25 and 18 goals respectively. They will be in the national team and much of what the Portuguese hope to achieve will revolve around the actions of these two.

Managers from many European clubs will have an eye on Domingos, in particular. He is still looking to find a lucrative deal which may well involve him moving abroad. Joao Pinto, on the other hand, is an established national player, well known all over the world, still young, well paid and with no wish to play anywhere but Portugal. There are few players who feel this way, and that is why the fans love them. Men like Joao Pinto like to play for one club, one country, one crowd. He will be one of the stars of Euro 96.

Porto goalkeeper Vitor Baia is another, like Domingos, who will be closely watched by international managers. His club have said that he is not for sale. But many people are more or less sure that he will find his way to Barcelona.

Other members of the squad might be on the move, too. So much depends on how well they respond to the challenge of this great tournament.

PLAYER TO WATCH: Rui Costa

BENFICA's financial crisis meant that they could not afford to keep this splendid player, and they let him go to Fiorentina in Italy. But Rui is still a 'red' and often says that one day he will go back to Portugal and play again for his former club.

Rui Costa was perhaps the most influential Portugal player during the qualification games for Euro 96. His performances at Windsor Park (Northern Ireland), at Lansdowne Road (Republic of Ireland) and at the Stadium of Light in Lisbon, when Jack Charlton's team were finally seen off, were memorable and made a decisive contribution to Portugal's qualification.

Costa is still only 24 and his career is just beginning. He was one of the players Carlos Queiroz worked with under his youth plan which brought so many talents into Portuguese football.

Rui Costa's career started at Centro Cultural da Pontinha, a rather modest club. But his subsequent fame made the club better known, and now the oldest tournament for young players in Portugal is called the Rui Costa Tournament.

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
VITOR BAIA FC *Porto* 26 yrs
RUI CORREIA *Braga* 28 yrs
ALFREDO CASTRO *Boavista* 33 yrs

DEFENDERS
CARLOS SECRETARIO *FC Porto* 26 yrs
HELDER CRISTOVAO *Benfica* 25 yrs
FERNANDO COUTO *Parma (Ita)* 26 yrs
PAULO MADEIRA *Belenenses* 25 yrs
PAULINHO SANTOS *FC Porto* 25 yrs

MIDFIELDERS
OCEANO CRUZ *Sporting Lisbon 33 yrs*
JOSE TAVARES *Boavista* 31 yrs
DIMAS TEIXEIRA *Boavista* 27 yrs
LUIS FIGO *Barcelona (Spa) 23 yrs*
PAULO SOUSA *Juventus (Ita)* 25 yrs
VITOR PANEIRA *Guimaraes* 30 yrs

FORWARDS
DOMINGOS OLIVEIRA *FC Porto* 27 yrs
JOAO VIEIRA PINTO *Boavista* 24 yrs
ANTONIA FOLHA *FC Porto* 25 yrs
PEDRO BARBOSA *Sporting Lisbon* 25 yrs
RICARDO SA PINTO *Sporting Lisbon* 23 yrs
HUGO PORFIRIO *Uniao Leiria* 23 yrs
RUI COSTA *Fiorentina (Ita)* 24 yrs
JORGE CADETE *Celtic (Sco)* 27 yrs

Fatih's final fling

The Turks could spring a surprise, says Hasan Cemali

WITH WEEKS to go before Euro 96, Turkish national team coach Fatih Terim made a shock announcement: he is to leave the job after the tournament.

He has neither resigned nor been forced to leave. He is leaving of his own accord – his contract expires on June 30, the day of the European Championship Final.

In a press conference, Terim spoke firmly and strongly. "I kept my word. Our aim was to qualify for the finals. We achieved it. I can assure you that my departure will not change anything. Once you have a settled system and see it is working, you don't need to worry.

"Faith in the system is the correct word for it. Our next aim is to make the quarter-finals in England. My players are capable of doing so. We will surprise everyone."

It is no secret that Terim has been heavily courted by Galatasaray, who have announced that he will be their next team boss. Terim, however, has made it clear that he has not yet agreed terms with the club he served with such distinction as a player for many years. He also said that he had been approached by a number of other clubs.

"Until a contract is signed, I cannot say I have agreed terms with Galatasaray," he told the press. However, if the Galatasaray deal falls through, which is highly unlikely, it is certain that Terim will be involved in Turkish soccer in some form next season.

Galatasaray's Scottish coach Graeme Souness has already been told that his services will not needed next season and the club is anxious for Terim to start work as soon as possible.

While Terim's announcement was welcomed by Galatasaray fans, it comes as bad news for those who wish to see the continuing development of the national side. Soft-spoken and unpretentious, Fatih Terim has made himself a national hero by taking his side from obscurity under his German predecessor Sepp Piontek to their first major finals since 1954.

Attention naturally turns to who will take over for the World Cup qualifiers against Holland, Belgium, Wales and San Marino. There are few obvious successors, but speculation has centred on former national team manager Mustafa Denizli, now at Kocaelispor. Another possiblity is Terim's assistant Rasim Kara.

Terim's success with the national side should not be exaggerated. In a way he has been lucky to work with a good generation of players and has had strong support from the national federation.

The Turks plan to bring their own beef . . . it might not be the only scare they are involved in

As the domestic League season reached its climax, two of the four clubs which provide the bulk of players for the national squad, Fenerbahce and Trabzonspor, were challenging for the title. This meant that players from Galatasaray and Besiktas, already out of the title race, had time to relax and recharge in time for the finals and avoid the injuries that Terim fears most. The same cannot be said of players from Fenerbahce and Trabzonspor, who were locked in a fierce battle for the League title.

Trabzonspor lost the edge after losing 2-1 at home to Fenerbahce. National keeper Rustu Rencber, recently recovered from injury, was in outstanding form in the game, making crucial saves from free-kick specialist Hami Mandirali, a player to watch in England.

Fenerbahce's winning goal was scored by Aykut Kocaman, one of Turkey's most consistent strikers who is pressing for a recall to the national side.

Turkey played a number of warm-up games before Euro 96. They started 1996 well, beating Belarus 3-2, but lost to the Czech Republic, before defeating Azerbaijan 1-0 and The Ukraine 3-2.

In the last of those games, Terim called up 17 newcomers as players from Fenerbahce and Trabzonspor were involved in the aforementioned match. He used subtitutions to look at as many players as possible.

His natural choice as cover for libero Ogun, Rahim, may have booked his ticket as a result of his performance, while Kocaelispor's Faruk may also make the squad. He scored in the 3-2 defeat of the Ukrainians and linked well wiith Hakan Sukur.

Of the more established players, Tugay showed encouraging glimpses of his old form, while Besiktas midfielder Sergen Yalcan provided a mixture of the good, the bad and the ugly, collecting a yellow card for a needless foul.

Terim now has two more games, against Estonia and Finland, before his team take the field against Croatia on June 11. The Turks plan to bring their own beef into Britain for the tournament, their response to the row over mad cow disease. It may not be the only scare the Turks are involved in at Euro 96.

STAR MAN
Hakan Sukur

TURKEY's hopes of success at Euro 96 rest largely on the shoulders of Hakan's performance. He is a big, strong centre-forward, whose direct approach gives the team its focus – a target man in every sense. Turkey like to attack down the flanks and Hakan is invariably on the end of the crosses.

He so impressed Torino with a spectacular goal in Berne in the Euro 96 qualifier against Swutzerland that they signed him for a fee of £3m last summer. But he grew homesick in Italy and was sold back to Galatasaray in November for the same fee.

He married his fiancee Esra while in Turin, but the marriage lasted about as long as his brief Italian exile. He returned to Turkey after just one goal in five games for Torino, and got divorced.

He has scored 16 times in the League back at Galatasaray – an indication he is tough mentally as well as physically. He has established an effective partnership with Welsh forward Dean Saunders. Gala won the Turkish Cup this season.

Hakan began with Sakaryaspor and was only 21 when Galatasaray signed him from Bursaspor. The goals flowed in Istanbul – 19 in his first full season, 16 in 1993-94 and 19 in 1994-95.

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS
RUSTU RECBER *Fenerbahce* 23 yrs
SANVER GOGME *Altay* 29 yrs
DEFENDERS
ALPAY OZALAN *Besiktas* 23 yrs
BULENT KORKMAZ *Galatasaray* 27 yrs
OSMAN OZKOYLU *Trabzonspor* 24 yrs
ERKAN AVSEREN *Vanspor* 24 yrs
OGUN TEMIZKANOGLU *Trabzonspor* 26 yrs
RAHIM ZAFER *Genclerbirligi* 25 yrs
RECEP CETIN *Besiktas* 30 yrs
VEDAT INCE EFE *Demir Karabukspor* 22 yrs
MIDFIELDERS
ABDULLAH ERCAN *Trabzonspor* 24 yrs
BULENT UYGUN *Fenerbahce* 24 yrs
OGUZ CETIN *Fenerbahce* 23 yrs
SERGEN YALCIN *Besiktas* 23 yrs
TAYFUN KORKUT *Fenerbahce* 22 yrs
TUGAY KERIMOGLU *Galatasaray* 25 yrs
TOLUNAY KAFKAS *Trabzonspor* 28 yrs
FORWARDS
ARIF ERDEM *Galatasaray* 24 yrs
ERTUGRUL SAGLAM *Besiktas* 26 yrs
FARUK YIGIT *Kocaelispor* 30 yrs
HAKAN SUKUR *Galatasaray* 24 yrs
HAMI MANDIRALI *Trabzonspor* 27 yrs

PLAYER TO WATCH: Abdullah Ercan

BLOND-HAIRED attacking midfielder Abdullah Ercan has had such a storming season for both Trabzonspor and the Turkish national side that Fatih Terim cannot imagine his starting 11 without him.

Previous national coach Sepp Piontek did not have much faith in the highly-gifted 24-year-old, but by the end of a summer tour to the Americas, Abdullah had appeared in all but one of Turkey's games under Fatih Terim. He provides dash and daring in midfield and works like a dynamo on the left-hand side of the pitch.

He joined Black Sea side Trabzonspor from the youth section of Fenerbahce in 1991. He has worn the national shirt 24 times and was a gold medal winner with the Turkish Olympic Under-21 side at the 1993 Mediterranean Games.

Istanbul's top three clubs, Fenerbahce, Galatasaray and Besiktas, are all keen to sign Abdullah. He says he will consider their offers after the finals in England. However, his talent is such that he could soon be playing outside Turkey for a foreign club.

The road to England

GROUP 1

04.09.94 ..Israel v Poland 2-1
07.09.94 ..Slovakia v France 0-0
07.09.94 ..Romania v Azerbaijan 3-0
08.10.94 ..France v Romania 0-0
12.10.94 ..Israel v Slovakia 2-2
12.10.94 ..Poland v Azerbaijan 1-0
12.11.94 ..Romania v Slovakia 3-2
16.11.94 ..Poland v France 0-0
16.11.94 ..Azerbaijan v Israel 0-2
13.12.94 ..Azerbaijan v France 0-2
14.12.94 ..Israel v Romania 1-1
29.03.95 ..Romania v Poland 2-1
29.03.95 ..Israel v France 0-0
29.03.95 ..Slovakia v Azerbaijan 4-1
25.04.95 ..Poland v Israel 4-3
26.04.95 ..France v Slovakia 4-0
26.04.95 ..Azerbaijan v Romania 1-4
07.06.95 ..Poland v Slovakia 5-0
07.06.95 ..Romania v Israel 2-1
16.08.95 ..France v Poland 1-1
16.08.95 ..Azerbaijan v Slovakia 0-1
06.09.95 ..France v Azerbaijan 10-0
06.09.95 ..Slovakia v Israel 1-0
06.09.95 ..Poland v Romania 0-0
11.10.95 ..Romania v France 1-3
11.10.95 ..Israel v Azerbaijan 2-0
11.10.95 ..Slovakia v Poland 4-1
15.11.95 ..Slovakia v Romania 0-2
15.11.95 ..Azerbaijan v Poland 0-0
15.11.95 ..France v Israel 2-0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Romania	10	6	3	1	18	8	21
France	10	5	5	0	22	2	20
Slovakia	10	4	2	4	14	18	14
Poland	10	3	4	3	14	12	13
Israel	10	3	3	4	13	11	12
Azerbaijan	10	0	1	9	2	29	1

GROUP 2

07.09.94 ..Cyprus v Spain 1-2
07.09.94 ..Macedonia v Denmark 1-1
07.09.94 ..Belgium v Armenia 2-0
08.10.94 ..Armenia v Cyprus 0-0
12.10.94 ..Denmark v Belgium 3-1
12.10.94 ..Macedonia v Spain 0-2
16.11.94 ..Belgium v Macedonia 1-1
16.11.94 ..Spain v Denmark 3-0
16.11.94 ..Cyprus v Armenia 2-0
17.12.94 ..Belgium v Spain 1-4
17.12.94 ..Macedonia v Cyprus 3-0
29.03.95 ..Spain v Belgium 1-1
29.03.95 ..Cyprus v Denmark 1-1
26.04.95 ..Armenia v Spain 0-2
26.04.95 ..Belgium v Cyprus 2-0
26.04.95 ..Denmark v Macedonia 1-0
10.05.95 ..Armenia v Macedonia 2-2
07.06.95 ..Denmark v Cyprus 4-0
07.06.95 ..Macedonia v Belgium 0-5
07.06.95 ..Spain v Armenia 1-0
16.08.95 ..Armenia v Denmark 0-2
06.09.95 ..Belgium v Denmark 1-3
06.09.95 ..Spain v Cyprus 6-0
06.09.95 ..Macedonia v Armenia 1-2
07.10.95 ..Armenia v Belgium 0-2
11.10.95 ..Denmark v Spain 1-1
11.10.95 ..Cyprus v Macedonia 1-1
15.11.95 ..Spain v Macedonia 3-0
15.11.95 ..Cyprus v Belgium 1-1
15.11.95 ..Denmark v Armenia 3-1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain	10	8	2	0	25	4	26
Denmark	10	6	3	1	19	9	21
Belgium	10	4	3	3	16	12	15
Macedonia	10	1	4	5	9	18	7
Cyprus	10	1	4	5	5	19	7
Armenia	10	1	2	7	5	17	5

GROUP 3

07.09.94 ..Iceland v Sweden 0-1
07.09.94 ..Hungary v Turkey 2-2
12.10.94 ..Turkey v Iceland 5-0
12.10.94 ..Switzerland v Sweden 4-2
16.11.94 ..Switzerland v Iceland 1-0
16.11.94 ..Sweden v Hungary 2-0
14.12.94 ..Turkey v Switzerland 1-2
29.03.95 ..Turkey v Sweden 2-1
29.03.95 ..Hungary v Switzerland 2-2
26.04.95 ..Hungary v Sweden 1-0
26.04.95 ..Switzerland v Turkey 1-2
01.06.95 ..Sweden v Iceland 1-1
11.06.95 ..Iceland v Hungary 2-1
16.08.95 ..Iceland v Switzerland 0-2
06.09.95 ..Sweden v Switzerland 0-0
06.09.95 ..Turkey v Hungary 2-0
11.10.95 ..Switzerland v Hungary 3-0
11.10.95 ..Iceland v Turkey 0-0
11.11.95 ..Hungary v Iceland 1-0
15.11.95 ..Sweden v Turkey 2-2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Switzerland	8	5	2	1	15	7	17
Turkey	8	4	3	1	16	8	15
Sweden	8	2	3	3	9	10	9
Hungary	8	2	2	4	7	13	8
Iceland	8	1	2	5	3	12	5

GROUP 4

04.09.94 ..Estonia v Croatia 0-2
07.09.94 ..Slovenia v Italy 1-1
07.09.94 ..Ukraine v Lithuania 0-2
08.10.94 ..Estonia v Italy 0-2
09.10.94 ..Croatia v Lithuania 2-0
12.10.94 ..Ukraine v Slovenia 0-0
13.11.94 ..Ukraine v Estonia 3-0
16.11.94 ..Slovenia v Lithuania 1-2
16.11.94 ..Italy v Croatia 1-2
25.03.95 ..Italy v Estonia 4-1
25.03.95 ..Croatia v Ukraine 4-0
29.03.95 ..Slovenia v Estonia 3-0
29.03.95 ..Ukraine v Italy 0-2
29.03.95 ..Lithuania v Croatia 0-0
26.04.95 ..Lithuania v Italy 0-1
26.04.95 ..Croatia v Slovenia 2-0
26.04.95 ..Estonia v Ukraine 0-1
07.06.95 ..Lithuania v Slovenia 2-1
11.06.95 ..Estonia v Slovenia 1-3
11.06.95 ..Ukraine v Croatia 1-0
16.08.95 ..Estonia v Lithuania 0-1
03.09.95 ..Croatia v Estonia 7-1
06.09.95 ..Italy v Slovenia 1-0
06.09.95 ..Lithuania v Ukraine 1-3
08.10.95 ..Croatia v Italy 1-1
11.10.95 ..Slovenia v Ukraine 3-2
11.10.95 ..Lithuania v Estonia 5-0
11.11.95 ..Italy v Ukraine 3-1
15.11.95 ..Slovenia v Croatia 1-2
15.11.95 ..Italy v Lithuania 4-0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	10	7	2	1	22	5	23
Italy	10	7	2	1	20	6	23
Lithuania	10	5	1	4	13	12	16
Ukraine	10	4	1	5	11	15	13
Slovenia	10	3	2	5	13	13	11
Estonia	10	0	0	10	3	31	0

GROUP 5

06.09.94 ..Czech Rep v Malta 6-1
07.09.94 ..Luxembourg v Holland 0-4
07.09.94 ..Norway v Byelorussia 1-0
12.10.94 ..Malta v Czech Rep 0-0
12.10.94 ..Byelorussia v Lux'bourg 2-0
12.10.94 ..Norway v Holland 1-1
16.11.94 ..Byelorussia v Norway 0-4
16.11.94 ..Holland v Czech Rep 0-0
14.12.94 ..Malta v Norway 0-1
14.12.94 ..Holland v Luxembourg 5-0
22.02.95 ..Malta v Luxembourg 0-1
29.03.95 ..Czech Rep v Byelorussia 4-2
29.03.95 ..Luxembourg v Norway 0-2
29.03.95 ..Holland v Malta 4-0
26.04.95 ..Byelorussia v Malta 1-1
26.04.95 ..Czech Rep v Holland 3-1
26.04.95 ..Norway v Luxembourg 5-0
07.06.95 ..Byelorussia v Holland 1-0
07.06.95 ..Lux'bourg v Czech Rep 1-0
07.06.95 ..Norway v Malta 2-0
16.08.95 ..Norway v Czech Rep 1-1
06.09.95 ..Czech Rep v Norway 2-0
06.09.95 ..Luxembourg v Malta 1-0
06.09.95 ..Holland v Byelorussia 1-0
07.10.95 ..Byelorussia v Czech Rep 0-2
11.10.95 ..Malta v Holland 0-4
11.10.95 ..Lux'bourg v Byelorussia 0-0
12.11.95 ..Malta v Byelorussia 0-2
15.11.95 ..Czech Rep v Luxemb'rg 3-0
15.11.95 ..Holland v Norway 3-0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Czech Rep	10	6	3	1	21	6	21
Holland	10	6	2	2	23	5	20
Norway	10	6	2	2	17	7	20
Byelorussia	10	3	2	5	8	13	11
Luxembourg	10	3	1	6	3	21	10
Malta	10	0	2	8	2	22	2

GROUP 6

20.04.94 ..N. Ireland v Liecht'stein 4-1
07.09.94 ..Liechtenstein v Austria 0-4
07.09.94 ..N. Ireland v Portugal 1-2
07.09.94 ..Latvia v Rep. Ireland 0-3
09.10.94 ..Latvia v Portugal 1-3
12.10.94 ..Austria v N. Ireland 1-2
12.10.94 ..Rep Ireland v Lcht'stein 4-0
13.11.94 ..Portugal v Austria 1-0
15.11.94 ..Liechtenstein v Latvia 0-1
16.11.94 ..N. Ireland v Rep. Ireland 0-4
18.12.94 ..Portugal v Liechtenstein 8-0
29.03.95 ..Rep. Ireland v N. Ireland 1-1
29.03.95 ..Austria v Latvia 5-0
26.04.95 ..Rep. Ireland v Portugal 1-0
26.04.95 ..Latvia v N. Ireland 0-1
26.04.95 ..Austria v Liechtenstein 7-0
03.06.95 ..Portugal v Latvia 3-2
03.06.95 ..Lcht'stein v Rep. Ireland 0-0
07.06.95 ..N. Ireland v Latvia 1-2
11.06.95 ..Rep. Ireland v Austria 1-3
15.08.95 ..Liechtenstein v Portugal 0-7
16.08.95 ..Latvia v Austria 3-2
03.09.95 ..Portugal v N. Ireland 1-1
06.09.95 ..Austria v Rep. Ireland 3-1
06.09.95 ..Latvia v Liechtenstein 1-0
11.10.95 ..Rep. Ireland v Latvia 2-1
11.10.95 ..Austria v Portugal 1-1
11.10.95 ..Liechtenstein v N. Ireland 0-4
15.11.95 ..Portugal v Rep. Ireland 3-0
15.11.95 ..N. Ireland v Austria 5-3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Portugal	10	7	2	1	28	7	23
Rep Ireland	10	5	2	3	17	11	17
N. Ireland	10	5	2	3	21	15	17
Austria	10	5	1	4	29	14	16
Latvia	10	4	0	6	11	20	12
Liechtenstein	10	0	1	9	1	40	1

GROUP 7

07.09.94 ..Wales v Albania 2-0
07.09.94 ..Georgia v Moldova 0-1
12.10.94 ..Moldova v Wales 3-2
12.10.94 ..Bulgaria v Georgia 2-0
16.11.94 ..Albania v Germany 1-2
16.11.94 ..Georgia v Wales 5-0
16.11.94 ..Bulgaria v Moldova 4-1
14.12.94 ..Wales v Bulgaria 0-3
14.12.94 ..Moldova v Germany 0-3
14.12.94 ..Albania v Georgia 0-1
18.12.94 ..Germany v Albania 2-1
29.03.95 ..Georgia v Germany 0-2
29.03.95 ..Bulgaria v Wales 3-1
29.03.95 ..Albania v Moldova 3-0
26.04.95 ..Germany v Wales 1-1
26.04.95 ..Moldova v Bulgaria 0-3
26.04.95 ..Georgia v Albania 2-0
07.06.95 ..Bulgaria v Germany 3-2
07.06.95 ..Wales v Georgia 0-1
07.06.95 ..Moldova v Albania 2-3
06.09.95 ..Germany v Georgia 4-1
06.09.95 ..Wales v Moldova 1-0
06.09.95 ..Albania v Bulgaria 1-1
07.10.95 ..Bulgaria v Albania 3-0
08.10.95 ..Germany v Moldova 6-1
11.10.95 ..Wales v Germany 1-2
11.10.95 ..Georgia v Bulgaria 2-1
15.11.95 ..Germany v Bulgaria 3-1
15.11.95 ..Albania v Wales 1-1
15.11.95 ..Moldova v Georgia 3-2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany	10	8	1	1	27	10	25
Bulgaria	10	7	1	2	24	10	22
Georgia	10	5	0	5	14	13	15
Moldova	10	3	0	7	11	27	9
Wales	10	2	2	6	9	19	8
Albania	10	2	2	6	10	16	8

GROUP 8

07.09.94 ..Finland v Scotland 0-2
07.09.94 ..Faroe Islands v Greece 1-5
12.10.94 ..Scotland v Faroes 5-1
12.10.94 ..Greece v Finland 4-0
12.10.94 ..Russia v San Marino 4-0
16.11.94 ..Scotland v Russia 1-1
16.11.94 ..Greece v San Marino 2-0
16.11.94 ..Finland v Faroe Islands 5-0
14.12.94 ..Finland v San Marino 4-1
18.12.94 ..Greece v Scotland 1-0
29.03.94 ..Russia v Scotland 0-0
29.03.95 ..San Marino v Finland 0-2
26.04.95 ..San Marino v Scotland 0-2
26.04.95 ..Greece v Russia 0-3
26.04.95 ..Faroe Islands v Finland 0-4
06.05.95 ..Russia v Faroe Islands 3-0
25.05.95 ..Faroes v San Marino 3-0
07.06.95 ..Faroe s v Scotland 0-2
07.06.95 ..San Marino v Russia 0-7
11.06.95 ..Finland v Greece 2-1
16.08.95 ..Scotland v Greece 1-0
16.08.95 ..Finland v Russia 0-6
06.09.95 ..Scotland v Finland 1-0
06.09.95 ..Faroe Islands v Russia 2-5
06.09.95 ..San Marino v Greece 0-4
11.10.95 ..Russia v Greece 2-1
11.10.95 ..San Marino v Faroes 1-3
15.11.95 ..Scotland v San Marino 5-0
15.11.95 ..Russia v Finland 3-1
15.11.95 ..Greece v Faroe Islands 5-0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Russia	10	8	2	0	34	5	26
Scotland	10	7	2	1	19	3	23
Greece	10	6	0	4	23	9	18
Finland	10	5	0	5	18	18	15
Faroes	10	2	0	8	10	35	6
San Marino	10	0	0	10	2	36	0

PLAY-OFF (at Anfield, Liverpool)

13.12.95 ..Holland v Rep. Ireland 2-0

The draw

Group A

				TV Channel
June 8	England v Switzerland	Wembley	3.00	ITV
June 10	Holland v Scotland	Birmingham	4.30	ITV
June 13	Switzerland v Holland	Birmingham	7.30	BBC
June 15	Scotland v England	Wembley	3.00	BBC
June 18	Scotland v Switzerland	Birmingham	7.30	ITV*
June 18	Holland v England	Wembley	7.30	ITV*

Group B

				TV Channel
June 9	Spain v Bulgaria	Leeds	2.30	ITV
June 10	Romania v France	Newcastle	7.30	BBC
June 13	Bulgaria v Romania	Newcastle	4.30	ITV
June 15	France v Spain	Leeds	6.00	ITV
June 18	France v Bulgaria	Newcastle	4.30	BBC*
June 18	Romania v Spain	Leeds	4.30	BBC*

Group C

June 9	Germany v Czech Rep	Manchester	5.00	BBC
June 11	Italy v Russia	Liverpool	4.30	BBC
June 14	Czech Republic v Italy	Liverpool	7.30	ITV
June 16	Russia v Germany	Manchester	3.00	ITV
June 19	Russia v Czech Rep	Liverpool	7.30	BBC*
June 19	Italy v Germany	Manchester	7.30	BBC*

Group D

June 9	Denmark v Portugal	Sheffield	7.30	BBC
June 11	Turkey v Croatia	Nottingham	7.30	ITV
June 14	Portugal v Turkey	Nottingham	4.30	BBC
June 16	Croatia v Denmark	Sheffield	6.00	BBC
June 19	Croatia v Portugal	Nottingham	4.30	ITV*
June 19	Turkey v Denmark	Sheffield	4.30	ITV*

Quarter Finals

QUARTER-FINALS

June 22	1	Winner B v Runner-up A	Liverpool	6.30 **
June 22	2	Runner-up B v Winner A	Wembley	3.00 **
June 23	3	Winner C v Runner-up D	Manchester	3.00 **
June 23	4	Runner-up C v Winner D	Birmingham	6.30 **

Semi Finals & Final

SEMI-FINALS

June 26	QF1 v QF4	Manchester	4.00	BBC & ITV
June 26	QF2 v QF 3	Wembley	7.00	BBC & ITV

FINAL

June 30		Wembley	7.00	BBC & ITV

* A decision on which matches will be screened live will made during the latter stage of the group competition. ** *BBC* has first-choice on quarter-finals. *Eurosport* will screening all matches in their entirety either live or by delayed transmission.

TOURNAMENT RULES AND REGULATIONS

In the group matches, winning teams will be awarded three points, with teams each being awarded one point for a draw. The top two teams qualify for the quarter-finals. If two or more teams are level on points after all the group matches have been played, they will be separated by the following:

1. Points gained in matches between the teams in question.
2. Goal difference in matches between the teams in question.
3. Greater number of goals scored in matches between the teams in question.
4. Goal difference in all group matches.
5. Greater number of goals scored in all group matches.
6. Coefficient of points gained from last three qualifying rounds of Euro 92, USA 94 and Euro 96.
7 Fair Play conduct.
8. Drawing lots.

Each match in the knockout stages must produce a result. If teams are level after 90 minutes, extra time will be played until a deciding goal – the 'Golden Goal' – is scored. If no goal is scored in 30 minutes of extra time, a penalty shoot-out will be held under the standard international regulations.

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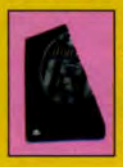

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From Keir Radnege in Rome

Campioni, Campioni!

Agony for Ajax as Juventus triumph on penalties in the Olympic Stadium

AT LAST, Juventus have the Cup they wanted most of all. No good trying to tell director Roberto Bettega that they won the Champions crown back in 1985. He will not accept it. The record books say so, but the shadow of the Heysel disaster ensures that that is one evening Juventus do not want to remember in a spirit of celebration.

May 22, 1996 – now that will be a different matter. The names of the players will be entered in the Juventus pantheon and they will talk in a decade's time of the Rome team in the same manner that Michel Platini, Zibi Boniek and Paolo Rossi are remembered now.

Juventus deserved to win. The fact they did so via the deeply unsatisfying penalty shoot-out will remain a matter for regret. But, for once, a minor one. The consensus in Rome was that Juventus played better on the night and would have deserved it anyway.

Joy for Juve . . . Vialli lifts the Cup

Neutrals had, in the main, looked to Ajax. With Ajax, you get more than a team for a day, more than a cup on the night; you get a philosophy, an attitude, a code which represents much of the best in the game. That the 'right way' can be maintained while winning one of the world game's most prestigious prizes says an enormous amount about Louis Van Gaal and his staff.

But football teams are made up not of pre-programmed, if highly-talented, robots, but of individuals. Who, for example, would have picked Frank De Boer as a likely candidate for confusion? Yet there he was, in the early exchanges, in a tangle with his own goalkeeper and thus conceding Ravanelli's strike. Who would have expected that Patrick Kluivert, whatever role he might play in the game after his knee surgery, would contribute nothing – no movement, no fluency, no acceleration? Only a few spiteful pushes and kicks to suggest that all his crises over the past year have taught him little.

Technically and tactically, Juve won the day, despite the injuries which ultimately took their toll on Antonio Conte, Fabrizio Ravanelli and Paulo Sousa. But while it may be a little unfair to call Juve a one-day wonder, the long-term prospects for their title defence are uncertain.

Skipper Gianluca Vialli – who wasted the game's best chance in the closing minutes – appears to be heading off into the sunset and it surely will not be long before Pietro Vierchowod admits the struggle is beyond him. Alex Del Piero is not a one-man band; his efforts this past term were remarkable up to Christmas then flat up to Easter. The more pressure, the less he can deliver right now. Juventus should be aware of that.

Ajax kicked off but it was Juventus who were the quickest to get their game going. The Italians' pace clearly caught the Dutch off balance and Blind, Frank De Boer and their defensive colleagues struggled to catch up with the game. The early openings all fell to Juventus. First Del Piero needed just a little too long to control a crossfield pass from Vialli, then Ravanelli fired hastily high and wide after Edwin Van der Sar's lack of command left the Ajax defence at sixes and sevens.

Worse was to come for both Ajax and their goalkeeper when he and Frank De Boer allowed what should have been a harmless through-ball to bounce between them. Ravanelli, delicate as the white feather of his nickname, pushed the ball away from them, slipped through the space and slid the ball home from the most remarkable of angles. Van der Sar and De Boer exchanged a few words and hung their heads. Most definitely not Cup-holding defensive work.

To their credit, Ajax worked hard to make amends. Their touch and passing were surprisingly hesitant at times and skipper Blind, playing a risky game in front of his fellow defenders, had little to offer. But, as the half went on, so Ajax began to contain the driving attacking runs of Moreno Torricelli. They tightened up on Ravanelli and Vialli and started to threaten.

One superb move down the right ended with Kiki Musampa shooting, perhaps with unnecessary haste, into Angelo Peruzzi's arms. Then a deflected drive from Blind brought Ajax their first corner.

Blind, suddenly, began to look the part. Musampa, with a steady stream of possession, gained in confidence and pace and Juve, for the first time, began to look vulnerable. They could have taken a potentially decisive advantage when Del Piero sent Didier Deschamps clear but Van der Sar tipped the shot wide with a save which made all the difference. Ajax went down the other end, won a free-kick and Frank De Boer, making up for his earlier blunder, found the gap to surprise Peruzzi and thus create Litmanen's equaliser.

It was the Finn's ninth goal of the campaign. He was also Ajax's best player for the first hour, linking midfield and attack with remarkable touch and insight. But that was just about the end of Ajax as a serious threat.

The rest of the match was mainly about Juventus. They 'out-shot' Ajax by 13 to six and 'out-cornered' them 10-6. Vialli chipped against the bar and was foiled three times, brilliantly, by the reflexes of Van der Sar.

The first period of extra time was goalless and chance-less. The second period offered more – Van der Sar saving twice from Vialli and Del Piero hitting the goalkeeper in the very last minute. But that meant it was Juventus setting the pace of the game and Ajax being dragged along.

The only time, indeed, that Ajax had an advantage was in taking the first penalty of the shoot-out . . . and, of course, they missed that.

Champions League leading scorers

9 – Litmanen (Ajax). 6 – Del Piero (Juventus), Warzycha (Panathinaikos), Raul (Real Madrid). 5 – Kluivert (Ajax), Ouedec (Nantes), Nikiforov (Moscow Spartak). 4 – Newell (Blackburn), Zamorano (Real Madrid), Brattbakk (Rosenborg), Ravanelli (Juventus).

MasterCard Champions League All-Star XI 1995-96
Van der Sar (Ajax) -Reiziger (Ajax), Sammer (Borussia Dortmund), F De Boer (Ajax), Torricelli (Juventus) – R De Boer (Ajax), Deschamps (Juventus), Litmanen (Ajax), Davids (Ajax) – Raul (Real Madrid), Del Piero (Juventus). Reserves: Blind (Ajax), Moller (Borussia Dortmund), Paulo Sousa (Juventus), Kluivert (Ajax), Warzycha (Panathinaikos). As voted by a panel of senior international soccer writers, chaired by Sir Bobby Charlton

* Juventus will probably be fined by UEFA for the flares and rockets let off their fans. The Italian federation should also be fined heavily for the incompetence of their media organisation. Ten minutes before kick-off is far too late to start distributing high-cost telephones to several hundred deadline-chasing journalists.

Headless hero . . . Ravanelli celebrates Juve's goal

Champions League Cup Final
Rome, Olimpico – May 22, 1996

JUVENTUS 1 (Ravanelli 12) **AFC AJAX 1** (Litmanen 40)

After extra time. Juventus won 4-2 on penalties

HT: 1-1. Att: 70,000. Ref: Diaz Vega (Spa).

Juventus: Peruzzi – Torricelli, Ferrara, Vierchowod, Pessotto – Conte (Jugovic 43), Paulo Sousa (Di Livio 56), Deschamps – Vialli, Del Piero, Ravanelli (Padovano 76). Subs not used: Rampulla, Porrini. Ajax: Van der Sar – Silooy, Blind, F De Boer (Scholten 67), Bogarde – George, R De Boer (Wooter 91), Litmanen, Davids – Kanu, Musampa (Kluivert 46). Subs not used: Grim, Van den Bergh.

Penalty sequence (Ajax first): Davids saved, Ferrara 0-1; Litmanen 1-1, Pessotto 1-2; Scholten 2-2, Padovano 2-3; Silooy saved, Jugovic 2-4.

MINUTE BY MINUTE

0.....Ajax kick off.
2.....Conte forces the first corner, for Juventus.
3.....A long crossfield ball from Vialli finds Del Piero in space but he needs too much time to control the ball and Ajax cover quickly to concede another corner.
7.....Torricelli's drive is only parried by Van der Sar, but Ravanelli, with the Ajax defence at sixes and sevens, fires the loose ball high and wide.
12...Juventus go ahead. A lob forward appears to present no problem for Ajax but Frank De Boer and Van der Sar leave the ball for each other and RAVANELLI touches it away, slips between the Ajax men and slides his shot home from the most acute of angles: 1-0 to Juventus.
21...A beautiful reverse pass by Litmanen sends George clear down the Ajax right but Musampa is too hasty and his first-time shot is cleanly gathered by Peruzzi.
22 ..George is booked for a late tackle on Pessotto.
23 ..A shot from Blind from 30 yards is deflected over the bar by Pessotto for Ajax's first corner.
25 ..Del Piero is tripped by Bogarde just outside the corner of the Ajax penalty box, but his own free-kick curls into the arms of Van der Sar.
34 ..Musampa thinks he has scored after a goalmouth skirmish but three Ajax players are offside – even if the ball did cross Peruzzi's line, which is doubtful.
37 ..Nearly a Juve second. Del Piero puts Deschamps in but the Frenchman's angled shot is tipped wide.
40 ..Ajax equalise. Vierchowod is penalised for jumping into Kanu, Frank De Boer drives his free-kick through the wall, Peruzzi can only push it out and LITMANEN is quickest to turn and slide the ball home: 1-1.
42 ..Jugovic substitutes for the injured Conte.
Half-time: Ajax 1 Juventus 1

46 ..Juventus restart. Ajax are altered in personnel and shape by the substitution of Musampa by Kluivert.
47 ..Del Piero curls a free-kick over the wall and Van der Sar catches cleanly.
56 ..Juventus replace Paulo Sousa with Di Livio, whose first touch is a drive, after a free-kick, which flies narrowly wide of Van der Sar's left-hand post.
59 ..Ravanelli is fortunate to escape a booking for a late tackle on Bogarde which the referee does not see.
61 ..Juventus regain their attacking verve. Ravanelli feeds Vialli, whose instant shot is well saved by Van der Sar, then Del Piero has an effort on the turn blocked by Bogarde before claiming a penalty – in vain – after being bundled off the ball by the Ajax defender.
67 ..Limping Frank de Boer is substituted by Scholten.
73 ..Vialli comes close to turning the game single-handed. First he gives Del Piero an opening for a shot which Van der Sar fists clear, then he turns brilliantly to chip against the bar.
76 ..Juventus make their third substitution, bringing on Padovano for the struggling Ravanelli.
83...Blind is booked for a high challenge on Deschamps.
86 ..Juventus are finishing the stronger. Padovano robs Scholten on the halfway line and races away down the left. He cuts into the penalty box where Blind's challenge takes the pace off his cross-shot; Vialli is first to the ball, rounds Van der Sar but stabs his shot into the sidenet.
Full time: 1-1

Extra time
91 ..Ajax bring on Wooter for Ronald De Boer.
92 ..Virtually the first thing he does, pulling back Torricelli by the shirt, earns Wooter a yellow card.
94 ..Padovano's angled cross is headed wastefully wide by Deschamps.
98...Blind sees a rising drive punched out by Peruzzi.
103....Torricelli is booked for a trip on George.
104....As the first period of extra time ends, so Juventus force two corners in quick succession.
Extra time, half-time: 1-1

106....Di Livio is booked for pulling Davids back.
107....Juve go for it: Jugovic sees a free-kick deflected just wide by a defensive head then Van der Sar tips another Deschamps effort wide for a corner.
113....Vialli, twisting and turning, escapes Bogarde on the edge of the six-yard box again. Van der Sar falls on his low shot at the foot of the post.
119....Jugovic crashes through two tackles in the penalty area and lays the ball back for Del Piero. History beckons as he steadies, take aim and fires . . . straight into Van der Sar's midriff.
Full time, extra time: 1-1

WHAT THEY SAID

MARCELLO LIPPI (Juventus coach): I think we deserved to win over the 90 minutes and then again over the 120 minutes without going to penalties. We looked sharp, well-prepared, calm. We knew what we wanted and how to go about it and that was our great strength.

With all due respect to Ajax, victory was more important to us and I think that was evident in the way we played. Of course Ravanelli scored a superb goal and, in the shoot-out, Peruzzi did a marvellous job. Winning the league last year was wonderful because it was the first major prize I had ever won. This is different – it's wonderful for all sorts of people for different reasons. I'm sure it will go down in the history of Juventus' greatest moments.

GIANLUCA VIALLI (Juventus captain): I'm very happy because this is the perfect climax to so many years of hard work. I've been very close to this cup before, four years ago, when I was with Sampdoria and Barcelona beat us. We've all worked hard – and we've had some fun along the way.

LOUIS VAN GAAL (Ajax coach): We didn't play well enough – unlike Juventus. They put us under a great deal of pressure, especially at the back, which is where we start to build our game. Add that to the fact that our best players have been carrying injuries for some time. So Juventus were able to capitalise on our weak points. We just missed too many players at 100 per cent to be able to give a good performance.

We thought Kluivert could play maybe 30 minutes – that's one of the reasons we brought him on at half-time. Also Ronald De Boer could not get into the game in the first half. I thought moving him over to the left could help. That meant changing a few other things round.

I do give Juventus all credit for the way they played. They did exactly what we had expected. We were just not able to react as we should have been. You can tell, when you get to the start of penalties, who is going to win. When you have only a few players volunteering then you know you have lost. It's about confidence and morale. By contrast, look at the way Ferrara took the first penalty for Juventus! That was confidence, all right.

Tussle in Brussels . . . PSG's Djorkaeff with Schottel of Rapid

Last laugh for Luis

Keir Radnedge reports from Brussels on a first European triumph for PSG and their outgoing coach Luis Fernandez

EUROPEAN football came back to Brussels for a final for the first time since the Heysel tragedy, with not an English or Italian team in sight. Perhaps that was all for the best. The fewer ghosts we had in what is now the King Baudouin Stadium, the better.

Not surprising, maybe, that the Belgians appeared rusty in organisational skills. About as rusty as Paris Saint-Germain proved when it came to putting the ball on target in the goal area.

Paris, far superior to doughty but pedestrian Rapid Vienna, did not really have much excuse. Unlike the Belgians, whose game has more problems than solutions. A long-term giveaway television contract is one, a behind-the-times lack of progress on commercial marketing is another. The Bosman case compounds the lot. Only champions Club Brugge, it appears, saw the future and made any serious attempt to mesh their players into four or five-year contracts. The rest – the Anderlechts, Standards, etc – are seeing their playing assets walking out of the door.

Brugge boss Antoine Van Hove believes his club, with a little good fortune, may reach the Champions League semi-finals next season. The evidence provided in the Baudouin stadium by Paris SG and Rapid, who are not even championship-winning material in their own countries, is that Van Hove is in dreamland.

Belgian football is going backwards and it is hard to believe that their best teams will be able to compete at top level as they once did.

Not that a football renaissance is beyond anyone. Look at France. Three years ago the French were in the depths of disgraced despair. Marseille had been kicked out of Europe after being caught masterminding a web of corruption which appeared to be stifling the life out of the entire domestic game. Yet, within three short seasons, the French were celebrating their finest-ever season on the European club stage, with Nantes having reached the Champions League semi-finals, Bordeaux having reached – most honourably – the UEFA Cup Final, and Paris having won the Cup-winners Cup.

They are only the second French winners in Europe . . . and the first honourable ones. Also highly-deserving after having reached European semi-finals in each of the three previous seasons and having blown up most bitterly when the domestic title appeared to be a walkover. No wonder they enjoyed themselves so much at the final whistle.

Coach Luis Fernandez and defender Patrick Colleter even brought their young children out of the stands to join in the celebrations. Fernandez, touchingly, said: "My wife was here as well. She and my children have been my strength, and I wanted to pay them this tribute."

Fernandez has lived his two years as PSG coach on his nerve-ends and remained happy with his decision to quit at the season's end. The Paris fans may not be so happy, judging by the way they broke into their chant of "Luis! Luis!" at the end. President Michel Denisot has an awkward dilemma ahead: whether to try to persuade the hero of the hour to stay or allow him to walk out, perhaps to one of their major rivals.

Whether Fernandez stays or goes, PSG face a busy close season. The manner in which victory was achieved – with a scoreline which in no way reflected their technical superiority – demonstrated precisely why their League campaign had fallen apart: they have not found a ruthlessly effective, goal-scoring replacement for George Weah.

Rai's early departure through injury was unfortunate but Rai is no Weah in the penalty box, Patrice Loko is still putting his game back together after a traumatic year off the pitch. And Julio Dely Valdes has had a nightmare year, scoring only two goals. His lack of confidence showed.

Tactically, the teams were not so far apart. Both played with three at the back – with Le Guen and Ivanov as sweepers – cluttered midfield with a line of four, then played one mid-attacker further forward behind two strikers. The difference was all in the talent and intent.

Paris had the skill and verve to attack; Daniel Bravo, now off to Parma in what had been considered the twilight of his career, was superb in midfield; Youri Djorkaeff was magnificent just behind his strikers. Rapid, by contrast, considered their tactic as a negative one, a net in which they hoped to stifle the final.

They managed long enough to ensure the match will not stay long in the memory.

Djorkaeff had the first chance for Paris, seeing an angled drive tipped over the bar by goalkeeper Michael Konsel in the 19th minute. Then Bruno N'Gotty smashed home the only goal with a drive from a short-touch free kick. N'Gotty's shot took a deflection and skidded low past Konsel's right hand.

Paris appeared on the brink of swamping Rapid. But their shooting was as almost as inept as that in the FA Cup Final a few days later.

Dely Valdes had a close-range effort deflected over the bar just before the interval and fell over his feet when presented with an even easier opportunity four minutes after the break. Djorkaeff seized on a loose ball only to fire narrowly wide, Dely Valdes popped a free header over the bar and Loko pulled an angled drive across the face of Konsel's goal.

Only twice was Paris keeper Bernard Lama called to account. He blocked a flying header from Andy Heraf more by luck than judgment in the 63rd minute, then made a brilliant flying save from an Ivanov header in the last seconds.

That made Lama the hero not only of the Paris support but of every neutral. Another half-hour really would have been too much . . . which must say something, surely, about the Cup-winners Cup as a whole.

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN 1
(N'Gotty 28)
RAPID VIENNA 0

May 8 – Brussels, King Baudouin Stadium

HT: 1-0. **Att:** 37,500. **Ref:** Pairetto (Ita).

Paris SG: Lama – Roche, Le Guen, N'Gotty - Fournier (Llacer 76), Bravo, Guerin, Colleter – Djorkaeff – Loko, Rai (Dely Valdes 11). Subs not used: Nouma, Dieng, Dutruel.
Rapid: Konsel – Hatz, Ivanov, Schottel – Heraf, Guggi, Stoger, Kuhbauer, Marasek – Jancker, Stumpf (Barisic 46).
Subs not used: Lederer, Haller, Mandreko, Hedl.

Matchwinner . . . N'Gotty with the Cup

Kaiser completes his collection

IN ALL his wonderful career as a player, Franz Beckenbauer never won the UEFA Cup. He was a runner-up once, in his last days at Hamburg, but that was all.

The rest – no problem. World Cup, European Championship, World Club Cup, Champions Cup, Cup-winners Cup, plus all the titles the German and American domestic games had to offer during his stints as a revolutionary sweeper, then midfielder with Bayern Munich and New York Cosmos.

But never the UEFA Cup . . . until now, in the unique joint role of president and coach.

Not that Beckenbauer would have chosen it that way. He has cause to be proud that Bayern are now one of only four clubs to have won all three European competitions – along with Barcelona, Ajax and Juventus. But triumph over Bordeaux was heavily coloured by regret at the manner in which Bayern's high-cost Dream Team had allowed the championship to slip away from them.

Beckenbauer, never one to shirk the truth, was candid about the decisions he had taken during the last few weeks of the season, culminating in the dismissal of coach Otto Rehhagel with three weeks of the season remaining – weeks which included the UEFA Cup Final against the remarkable French club.

After celebrating Bayern's first European trophy since he captained them to victory in the 1976 Champions Cup, Beckenbauer said: "This has been a well-deserved win on top of a series of good results in Europe. It proves we are back in international class. My only regret is that we didn't win the Bundesliga title as well.

"Criticism is easy but it's not easy to tell a friend he has to leave. Perhaps I should have acted sooner or, at that late stage, perhaps I should have left well alone. I will take the responsibility."

The Kaiser enjoyed a doubly painful return to coaching, sporting a black eye for the second leg in Bordeaux which he suffered when a ball hit him during training. But he then duly presided over football history – not only for his club but for Jurgen Klinsmann, whose fortunate deflection of a Thomas Strunz cross-shot brought a record-breaking 15th goal of the European campaign.

Bayern had taken full advantage of the home leg to seize a decisive 2-0 advantage. They exerted virtually all the pressure in the first half-hour without reward before the game burst into life within two dramatic minutes.

In the 34th minute, Bordeaux nearly scored when Didier Tholot pounced on a mistake by Swiss midfielder Ciriaco Sforza and burst away from the halfway line, only to be foiled by goalkeeper Oliver Kahn. Then Bayern went down to the other end and took the lead when captain Lothar Matthaus floated over a corner and Thomas Helmer rose above a posse of defenders to head the ball into the right-hand corner.

Mehmet Scholl fired in Bayern's second on the hour but Beckenbauer approached the second leg with caution. He was well aware that the French club had capitalised on home advantage to great effect against Milan in the quarter-finals with a 3-0 win in the second leg after losing the first 2-0.

Bordeaux duly charged forward but Bayern sat back, coolly soaking up the pressure, then hit Bordeaux twice on the break in the first 20 minutes of the second half through Scholl and Emil Kostadinov – the Bulgarian who so delights in upsetting French teams in front of their own fans.

Bordeaux, left with the impossible task of having to score five goals in 25 minutes, reduced the arrears with a free-kick by Daniel Dutuel in the 75th minute, but four minutes later Klinsmann stuck out a knee to divert Strunz's shot and that was that.

Klinsmann, now the highest all-time individual scorer in one season in European competition, said: "I'm pleased but I wasn't thinking so much about the record. The most important thing was to win that Cup, the only one we hadn't won, and to bring it back to Munich."

Already Bayern have started thinking ahead to next season. Giovanni Trapattoni is returning as coach and Mario Basler has been signed from Werder Bremen, probably in a part-exchange deal which will involve Andy Herzog returning to Bremen. That may not be the end of the changes as Bayern pursue the Bundesliga title once more and defend the UEFA Cup.

German celebrations drowned out, for many, recognition of Bordeaux's achievement – but not for Beckenbauer. He said: "To play 20 games in Europe from last summer and to reach the final while, at the same time, having to fight against relegation in their own League – that's a remarkable achievement.

"They should be invited back into the UEFA Cup next season. That's the least they deserve."

Keir Radnedge on the 1995-96 UEFA Cup Final

Jurgen's joy . . . Klinsmann lifts the UEFA Cup

First leg (May 1)
BAYERN MUNICH 2
(Helmer 35, Scholl 60)
BORDEAUX 0

HT: 1-0. **Att:** 62,500.
Ref: Muhmenthaler (Swz)
Bayern: Kahn – Matthaus (Frey 53), Babbel, Ziege, Kreuzer, Helmer, Hamann, Scholl, Sforza, Klinsmann, Papin (Witeczek 70).
Bordeaux: Huard – Grenet, Lizarazu, Friis-Hansen, Dogon, Lucas, Croci, Dutuel, Tholot (Anselin 89), Richard Witschge, Bancarel.

Second leg (May 15)
BORDEAUX 1 (Dutuel 75)
BAYERN MUNICH 3
(Scholl 53, Kostadinov 65, Klinsmann 79)

HT: 0-0. **Att:** 36,000.
Ref: Zhuk (Belo)
Bordeaux: Huard – Bancarel, Lizarazu (Anselin 32), Friis-Hansen, Dogon, Lucas (Grenet 79), Zidane, Croci (Dutuel 57), Tholot, Witschge, Dugarry.
Bayern: Kahn – Babbel, Ziege, Strunz, Helmer, Frey (Zickler 60), Scholl, Sforza, Klinsmann, Matthaus, Kostadinov (Witeczek 75).

The Florence Nightingales

Fans waited until dawn to hail the heroes of Fiorentina's Coppa Italia win. Paddy Agnew reports

FIORENTINA fans have not had anything much to sing about for 21 years and they were not going to let the occasion slip by unnoticed. On the morning of Sunday May 19, 40,000 of them staged a vigil at Florence's Stadio Franchi, waiting up until four in the morning to greet the return of their conquering heroes, winners of the Italian Cup.

Fiorentina beat Atalanta 1-0 and 2-0 in the two-leg final, with the second leg in Atalanta's home town of Bergamo, where the Stadio Communale's 25,000 capacity restricted the Fiorentina presence to 4,000.

Undaunted by this, the club and town authorities combined to enable fans to watch the game live on giant screens at Fiorentina's home ground. With the match successfully concluded, fans stayed at their posts waiting until their team arrived home.

The all-night celebrations in Florence were a reflection not only of the 21-year wait for success (Fiorentina last won the Italian Cup in 1975 and the League title in 1969) but also an indication of the fans' desperate wish to see the club's excellent season rewarded with a trophy.

Fiorentina finished joint third with Lazio on 59 points, 14 behind champions Milan, but that final placing does not do justice to their season. In the end, they were the side that gave Milan the closest run for their money, remaining just one tantalising point behind the champions for nearly two months at the turn of the year.

If there was nothing surprising about Milan's title win (or indeed the move of Milan coach Fabio Capello to Real Madrid, as predicted last month), the same could not be said of a Fiorentina side who figured on nobody's list of championship challengers last August. With the Italian Cup safely on the sideboard, an obvious question now springs to mind about Fiorentina's forthcoming season.

Will the Florence club opt to concentrate on European competition next season, given that they are in the Cup-winners Cup, often the least demanding of the three UEFA competitions? Or will the club's owner, Vittorio Cecchi Gori, feel entitled to spend big this summer in an attempt to build up a side to challenge Milan, Juventus et al next season?

For the time being, Cecchi Gori is sounding optimistic, saying: "This isn't a point of arrival but rather a beginning. I hope that one day we'll be able to win the title."

Fiorentina's charismatic captain and striker, Argentine Gabriel Batistuta, was more realistic when saying: "I have three dreams at the moment. One would be to win the World Cup with Argentina . . . a second to win the Player of the Year title and a third to win a European cup with Fiorentina – and that last does not seem impossible to me."

Fiorentina's Cup win was the last act of a Serie A season in which Milan won their fourth title in five years, and left Torino, one of Italian soccer's most famous names, relegated to Serie B along with Cremonese, Padova and Bari. Poor Bari made history of a kind because their captain, Igor Protti, ended up joint leading scorer with Lazio's Giuseppe Signori on 24 goals. This was the first time that Serie A's leading scorer had featured in the ranks of a relegated side.

While Torino, Bari, Cremonese and Padova know their fates, the same cannot be said of promotion contenders Verona, Bologna, Reggiana, Perugia, Salernitana and Lucchese, who will be battling it out right to the last day (June 9).

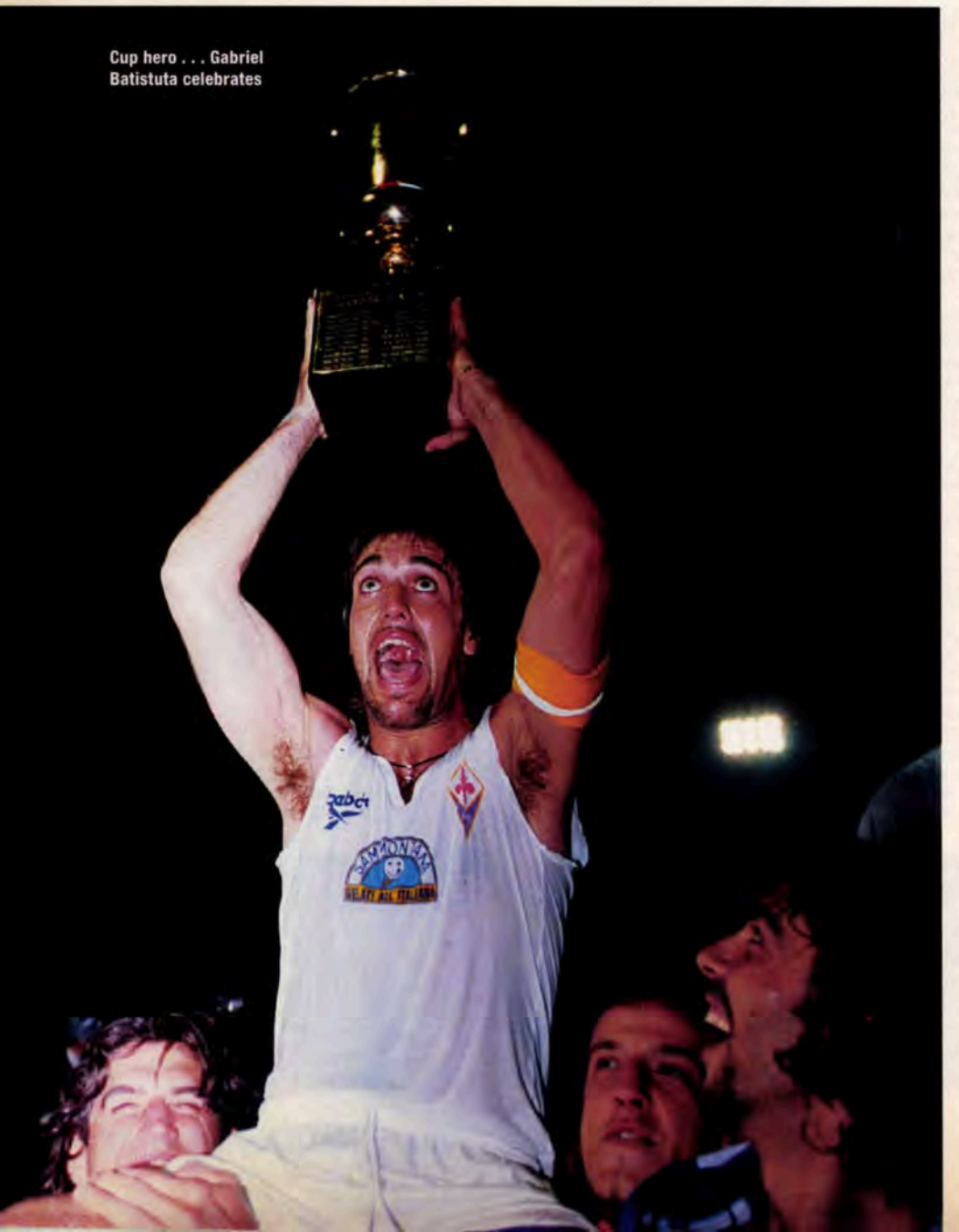
Nor has Torino's relegation done much to help the uncertain future of Turin's Stadio Delle Alpi, built for the 1990 World Cup, which has 75,000 seats and is far too large for Torino's Second Division requirements next season.

Worse still for the Delle Alpi is the ongoing Juventus dissatisfaction with a stadium which costs them more in rent and, above all, lost advertising revenue than other city-owned grounds throughout Italy. Remember that last season Juventus deserted Turin to play their UEFA Cup semi-final and final ties at San Siro in Milan, estimating that the move had saved them around £650,000 per match in advertising revenue.

Unlike other city-owned grounds, the Delle Alpi is currently leased to the Banco di San Paolo who took over the lease from the original builders Acqua Marcia. Pubbli-Gest, who administer the stadium on behalf of the bank, claim that the ground costs £3.5m a year to run, given rental, pitch and stadium maintenance costs.

Juventus argue that such a figure is too high, adding that they want to build their own soccer-only stadium, which would be cheaper to run and provide a more intimate atmosphere than Delle Alpi, where the pitch, surrounded by the almost-never-used athletics track, can be as far as 195 metres away from the spectator.

Delle Alpi, built at a cost of £80m, has become a white elephant that nobody wants. Turin Mayor Valentino Castellani has even suggested that it should be bulldozed. Many in Turin agree.



Cup hero . . . Gabriel Batistuta celebrates

Robson in, Cruyff out...

Barcelona sensation steals Atletico Madrid's thunder

BOBBY ROBSON will be working in the shadow of Johan Cruyff in more ways than one after a weekend that was sensational even by Barcelona's colourful history.

Robson, the 63-year-old former England manager, secured the biggest payday of his career when he was named as the Catalan club's new coach even before Cruyff had been told that his outspoken, idiosyncratic eight-year reign was at an end.

But Cruyff insists the city of Barcelona will continue to be his home and he may thus remain a focus for any discontent which might erupt in a notoriously volatile club.

The latest explosion of the Barcelona volcano overshadowed a tense climax to the championship, in which Atletico Madrid, having led just about all the way, found Valencia snapping at their heels right to the last match.

Robson, who had just taken FC Porto to the Portuguese championship for the second year in succession, has known Jose Luis Nunez ever since his England days, when the Barcelona president first pursued him. On that occasion Robson recommended Terry Venables, with Spanish championship-winning results. This time, however, as he explained: "The offer was just too good to turn down."

He added: "These two-and-a-half years with Porto have been marvellous, and I want to emphasise that I'm not leaving just for the money. I'm very sad at leaving Porto and Portugal. It was the professional challenge that attracted me.

"I am aware of how important Cruyff was to Barcelona but I'm not responsible for his departure. He was there eight years and that's a long time."

Nunez and Robson had agreed a two-year deal worth £85,000 a month even before a stumbling 1-1 draw with neighbours Espanyol ended Barcelona's faint Spanish title hopes and thus put the last skids beneath Cruyff. A month earlier they had lost 1-0 to Atletico Madrid after extra time in the Cup Final and were thus bound to finish a second successive season without a trophy.

While Barça were winning, Nunez and his directors had little option but to stick by the unpredictable and charismatic Cruyff, but two blank seasons were too much to bear. Directors everywhere sack the manager to stave off fans' criticism and Barcelona proved no different to any other club.

The long-term target was Louis Van Gaal, coach of European champions Ajax Amsterdam. But Ajax had refused to release him from his contract, which expires next year. One scenario envisaged by Nunez was that Robson would take over for next season, keeping the bench warm for Van Gaal, then move up to the post of technical director in 1997-98. The prospects for that can be no more than 50-50.

Robson has had outstanding success since stepping down as manager of England after reaching the semi-finals of the 1990 World Cup. He won the Dutch championship twice with PSV Eindhoven, then moved to Portugal with Sporting Lisbon before being appointed by Porto at the start of 1994. Porto won the Cup at the end of that season – beating Sporting in the final – and have won the League in the past two seasons.

His appointment is all the more remarkable considering the surgery he underwent last summer for a facial cancer.

The Robson news was only the start of the fun and games. On the morning of Barcelona's last home game of the season, against Celta, the club announced that Cruyff had been sacked. The fact that he had earlier reached verbal agreement with Nunez for a further season cut no ice at a three-hour meeting with vice-president Joan Gaspart.

Assistant coach Charly Rexach was given control of the team for the last week of the season.

Tearful farewell . . . Robson leaves Porto

Cruyff's initial reaction was that he would "do other things with less pressure". But he was upset that the club had acted hastily to prevent him from bidding goodbye to the Nou Camp faithful.

"Now I wouldn't sit down to drink a coffee with Nunez," said Cruyff. "Why so much haste? Why didn't they sack me after the game against Celta? I believe the majority of the fans wanted to say goodbye. It's even more of an insult to the members and the general fans than it is to me. So be it, but I will continue to live in Barcelona. I have no intention of taking over at another club. But whatever happens at Nou Camp, I will never return while Nunez is the president."

Nunez insisted that the proposed extension to Cruyff's contract was based on an agreement that he would keep his thoughts about boardroom policy to himself. But his record could not be denied.

After arriving from Ajax in 1988, Cruyff guided Barcelona to the League title four times in succession from 1991. Occasionally it came unstuck and the 4-0 thrashing by Milan in the 1994 Champions Cup Final may be seen to have been the beginning of the end.

Highly-strung superstars such as Romario and Hristo Stoichkov moved on; a 5-0 thrashing of old enemy Real Madrid early in 1994 turned into a 5-0 defeat less than a year later. Real took the 1995 League title in Barcelona's first lean year under Cruyff. Oddly, both clubs have stuttered and stumbled through this past season.

The question now is whether Madrid, by signing Milan coach Fabio Capello plus Davor Suker and Predrag Mijatovic, or Barcelona, with Robson and the likes of French veteran Laurent Blanc, have turned the corner first?

Barça fans made no secret of their views, displaying banners in support of Cruyff and opposing the board at the Celta game. The majority of the 70,000 crowd whistled and waved white handkerchiefs when Nunez took his place in the directors' box.

The match did nothing to quell Catalan nerves: Barcelona fell 2-0 behind then recovered to win 3-2. Jordi Cruyff, on being substituted shortly before the end, responded to a standing ovation by throwing his shirt into the crowd and waving a gesture of defiant farewell. It is inconceivable that he will stay at the club.

Nunez was furious. He accused Cruyff senior of supporting subversive factions in boardroom politics and being too generous towards Jordi and to his son-in-law Jesus Angoy, a reserve goalkeeper. Cruyff hit back with a sharp denial and a threat of legal action.

This story will run and run . . .

KEIR RADNEDGE

Portugal

Final fan killed

TRAGEDY hit the Portuguese Cup Final when a Sporting Lisbon fan was killed by a rocket fired from the Benfica section in the Stadio Nacional.

The incident occurred soon after Benfica had opened the scoring in the eighth minute on their way to a 3-1 win. Rui Mendes, 36, was hit in the chest and was dead on arrival at hospital.

Prime Minister Antonio Guterres, who was in the VIP box, met top federation officials at half-time and decided not to suspend the match but to dispense with the cup presentation as a mark of respect. President Jorge Sampaio, who also attended the game, called on Sporting and Benfica fans to end the match peacefully, and an inquiry has begun.

Tension had been high for several days ahead of the first final in nine years between the two old rivals.

Sporting, who had ended the League campaign in better form, made a slow start and Benfica went ahead when Costinha dropped a shot and Mauro Airez hit home the rebound. Five minutes before half-time Benfica increased their lead when Bruno Caires sent skipper Joao Pinto away for a solo goal.

Joao Pinto headed a third in the 67th minute and Sporting grabbed their consolation four minutes from time through a penalty from Carlos Xavier after Gomes had fouled Sa Pinto.

Gomes was sent off for the challenge and Carlos Xavier was shown the red card in the final seconds, for dissent.

Porto had long since secured the League title, though there will be significant changes before they enter the UEFA Champions League next season. President Pinto da Costa must find replacements not only for Barcelona-bound coach Bobby Robson but also for goalkeeper Vitor Baia, who will be hoping to follow Robson to Spain.

ALBERTO DA SILVA

GERMANY

Arthur Rotmil reports on mixed fortunes for Bayern

UEFA Cup yes, Bundesliga no

Dortmund's day . . . Michael Zorc raises the Bundesliga *Meisterschale*

BAYERN MUNICH won the UEFA Cup, their first European trophy for 20 years, but their challenge for a record-breaking 14th League championship petered out with two defeats in four days.

Bayern president Franz Beckenbauer, who took over temporarily as coach following Otto Rehhagel's dismissal, failed to repeat his 1994 success. Then, Beckenbauer had taken over from the hapless Italian Giovanni Trapattoni – who astonishingly is taking charge again in Munich as from July 1 – and helped them to the title.

This time Bayern threw away their chance. They lost 3-2 away to Werder Bremen after being two up, and lost 2-1 away to Schalke, conceding the second goal in the last minute.

The inconsistent Borussia Dortmund steadied themselves just in time and retained the title with a match to go.

There is some consolation for Der Kaiser. He was a Bayern player when the club won all four of their European trophies, and now he has triumphed as a manager on the Euro scene. Bayern have thus joined the elite group of clubs who have won all three European competitions – namely Juventus, Ajax Amsterdam and Barcelona.

Bayern won all six away ties, with a goal tally of 20-4. In the final they crushed Bordeaux 5-1 on aggregate, with Jurgen Klinsmann scoring a record 15th goal in a Euro season.

Drama unfolded at the foot of the Bundesliga. Eintracht Frankfurt, one of only four clubs left who were original members of the elitist Federal League in 1963, have been relegated for the first time in their 97-year history.

Coach Karl-Heinz Korbel's replacement by the recalled Serb, Dragoslav Stepanovic, did not bring the hoped-for improvement.

Eintracht were champions in 1959 and a year later became the first German club to reach the European Cup Final. They have won the German Cup four times and the UEFA Cup once. But the money earned from these successes was largely squandered. Eintracht also lost heavily on transfer deals while managers came and went – 24 in all, over 33 years. Now the club have only one star: goalkeeper Andreas Kopke, Germany's No 1. He has now suffered the fourth relegation of his career, and says: "I don't want to play in the Second Division."

Eintracht's most influential figure, sports director Bernd Holzenbein, is the top scorer in the club's Bundesliga history. He says: "Serious errors of judgment and a catastrophic economic policy have brought this proud club to its knees. But I too have made mistakes in my 30 years at the club. I regard relegation as a personal tragedy." Whether he remains in his post is uncertain.

The club must find £1.3m or they may not get a professional licence to operate in the Second Division.

Also going down are Kaiserslautern and Uerdingen. While Uerdingen have been well adrift for some time, a win for Kaiserslautern in their final game could have saved them. However, they could manage only a 1-1 draw at Bayer Leverkusen.

Austria

Rapid's Final flop

RAPID VIENNA were distracted by the Cup-winners Cup Final, but continued to ride high in the Austrian First Division in the closing stages of the championship.

Their second appearance in a European final was no better than their first, when they lost in the same competition to Everton in 1985. They were outclassed by PSG and the 1-0 scoreline flattered the Austrians, who never had a chance.

In the League, champions Austria Salzburg slumped and a managerial change did not help. The club had hoped that former star defender, Heribert Weber, would lift a demoralised side.

Now Salzburg fear they might lose their best player and captain, Heimo Pfeiffenberger, who is being pursued by German clubs Schalke and Werder Bremen.

Grazer AK lost their successful manager, Hans-Ulrich Thomale, who is joining relegated Bayer Uerdingen in his native Germany. Perhaps he can succeed there, too, after leading GAK to promotion and into the upper reaches of the First Division.

FC Tirol took over the lead in the top division, albeit temporarily, for the first time in 18 months.

ARTHUR ROTMIL

Switzerland

Grasshopper on top

Zurich team cruise to Championship

EVEN a series of injuries to key players could not stop Switzerland's most successful club, Grasshopper, from winning their record 24th title. With two matches to go, all was decided and the blue-and-whites, the only team unbeaten in the championship play-offs after 12 matches, were celebrating their second entry into the Champions Cup.

The inconsistency of their nearest rivals, Sion, the Cup-winners, and Xamax Neuchatel, contributed to their success. And Grasshopper established an odd record by using 30 players – including 11 current or former internationals. No other Swiss club has ever engaged so many.

A lot of credit must go to team manager Christian Gross, a clever tactician and authoritative leader.

The team play the pressing game, based on the strongest defence in the League and a compact midfield. Up front, the arrival of international striker Kubilay Turkyilmaz was a major factor in their increased firepower.

Sadly the fans still are not turning up in the numbers expected in Zurich, the country's largest city.

In the Cup Final Sion came from two goals down to beat Servette 3-2 in Berne's Wankdorf stadium.

ARTHUR ROTMIL

Major signing . . . Kubilay Turkyilmaz

FRANCE

Too hot for the iron man

Andre Duclos on how the pressure got to PSG's Luis Fernandez

Final fling . . . Luiz Fernandez celebrates success in the Cup-winners Cup

"IF YOU can't take the heat," said President Harry Truman, "get out of the kitchen." But whoever thought Luis Fernandez, of all people, would wilt in the heat?

Alas, it has happened. The supposed iron man, toughest of midfielders, maker of a fortune playing for Parisian clubs, precocious as the manager of Cannes, determined as manager of Paris Saint-Germain, has thrown in the towel . . . managerially.

He is, he says, afraid to die, afraid to succumb to a heart condition. His wife is alarmed by his predicament. He does not even like to look in the mirror. So he will not be in charge of the team next season, though he expects to stay with the club.

Yet the last thing you can say is that Fernandez was a failure. True, Nantes ran away with the championship last season. True, Paris SG faltered in the last stretch of the championship as Guy Roux's amazing Auxerre, Cup winners against Third Division Nimes, got up steam. Against that, PSG reached the semi-finals of the European Cup last season, and – despite having George Weah poached by Milan – they won the European Cup-winners Cup this time, becoming only the second French club to lift a European trophy.

Perhaps PSG would have done better in the championship if the Panamanian striker from Cagliari, Dely Valdes, had not flagged after so fine a start. When Fernandez benched him in the Cup-winners Cup semi-final second leg in Paris, Valdes was philosophical. He had scored only one goal in four months. What is the reason for the drought?

There isn't just one, says Valdes. His quick transfer from Cagliari, for one thing, left him with just a fortnight's holiday, and it came just after a hernia operation so he could not prepare properly with the rest of his new team-mates. Plus, there was the stress of changing countries and cultures. And finally, there was birth of his son last December.

It is interesting to note that Vincent Guerin pays tribute for PSG's progress in Europe to two Brazilian internationals no longer there: the stopper Ricardo and the creative midfielder Valdo. They drew the team to the heights, he says; himself included. "They brought PSG an enormous plus."

Meanwhile, what a triumphant season for Guy Roux, 30 years at Auxerre and still going so strong. Sadly, defender Franck Silvestre was shown a yellow card at the very end of a disappointing draw in Bastia, which put him out of that final against Nimes.

Roux was not too happy in Bastia that evening, either. It was the old story of the TV tail wagging the football dog when PSG's vital League game was put back. All the less acceptable when the channel involved is *Canal Plus* – the bankrollers of PSG.

"Everyone should play the last three games at the same time!" protested Roux. Who could deny he was right? But he couldn't get his way.

As always, Auxerre have not been heavy spenders; they cannot afford to be. As always, their youth policy throws up perpetual talent. But Roux must be worrying about the Bosman ruling. If it affects a club as well off as Ajax, in terms of losing stars, what will it do to a little club like Auxerre?

How long can they keep a rising star such as 24-year-old Sabri Lamouchi, who has so impressed this season with his technique, flair and versatility?

And how many players will be leaving France this summer? We know that Monaco's Lilian Thuram is on his way to Italy and Blackburn Rovers have cast covetous eyes over the Bordeaux pair Zinedine Zidane and Christophe Dugarry. Both still have a year of their contracts to run, but if they do move, the probability seems that they, too, will go to Italy.

Lamouchi's ability to fill so many roles, either in midfield or up front, has been a special bonus for Aime Jacquet, as he prepares for the huge challenge of the European Championship finals.

In defence, few French players are as *polyvalent* as Emmanuel Petit, the 25-year-old left-footed Monaco man capped 15 times. Alas for him, Guerin and Eric Di Meco are left-footed, too, amd just as versatile, and Guerin, though no winger, can play more or less defensively down that left flank.

Top man . . . Guy Roux

You'll do, Roux

AUXERRE'S veteran coach, Guy Roux, has said all along that his ambition "is just to keep the club in the top division", but he really aimed much higher than that. And now, as PSG's Luis Fernandez said: "Guy won't be able to keep on saying that he's poor. The double will make him rich."

If so, it's well deserved, even though Roux's team struggled to beat little Nimes in the Cup Final. They made it safely in the League, despite dropping a point to Guingamp; PSG and Metz both failed to win on the same day and let Roux's squad in with a game to spare.

Roux is a much-experienced handler of difficult customers (including Eric Cantona) but is widely loved among players as well as fans. "I'm delighted for him," added Fernandez. "He's been waiting for this for such a long time, and he really deserves it."

Auxerre is in Burgundy and has a population of only 40,000 or so, many of whom no doubt will flock to next season's Champions Cup games. Nimes go into the Cup-winners Cup, and the UEFA Cup places are not yet decided.

At the other end of the table, Martigues, St Etienne and Gueugnon are relegated.

ANDRE DUCLOS

Belgium

RWD end Euro drought

Molenbeek make UEFA Cup for first time since 1980

As Brussels' second club, RWD Molenbeek have had little enough to celebrate over the years. A solitary league title success in 1975 compares unfavourably with the feats of Anderlecht.

So the place they have secured in next year's UEFA Cup is something of an achievement and a feat not managed since 1980, when they went out of the competition in the first round, beaten 4-3 by Torino.

RWD, coached by Rene Vandereycken and captained by defender Guy Vandermissen at the advanced age of 39, also enjoyed the distinction, by way of a goalless draw, of preventing already crowned champions Club Brugge from establishing a record of winning every match in the second half of the season.

It was with another honourable blank scoreline, in the local derby against Anderlecht, that RWD completed their programme.

Joining RWD in the UEFA Cup next season will be Germinal Ekeren, Lierse and Standard, who have amalgamated with Seraing. Ekeren prevented Seraing from bowing out gracefully by beating them 5-0 in a game which marked the retirement of Simon Tahamata, the popular Moluccan winger. He was feted a few days later when Ekeren met a team of European Moluccans managed by Johan Cruyff.

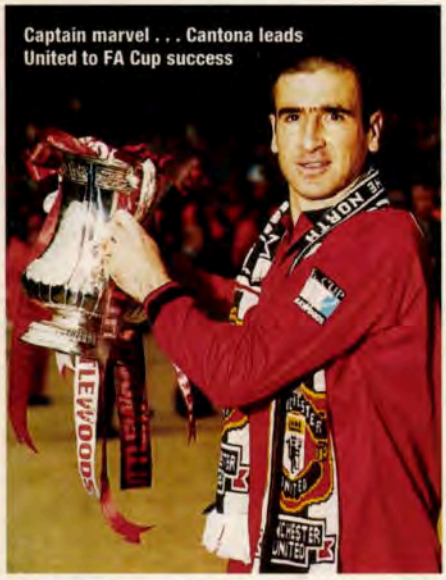
The relegated clubs are Beveren and Waregem, who by finishing well adrift at the bottom thus maintained their recent yo-yo existence.

NICHOLAS HARLING

England

Seeing double

John Kelly on Manchester United's historic season



Captain marvel . . . Cantona leads United to FA Cup success

RARELY in recent times have the champions attracted adoration and hatred in such equal measures, and yet, the history books will show that in 1996 Manchester United clinched a unique place in the annals of English football history . . . the first team to win a double double.

Requiring a draw at Middlesbrough on the final day, United made no mistake, winning 3-0 to finally kill off any lingering hopes Newcastle had of pipping them for the title. Newcastle had fought bravely, but United's third Premier League title in four years was arguably their most impressive.

Alex Ferguson's bold gamble on youth looked to have gone awry when United lost 3-1 at Aston Villa on the opening day of the season. But his faith in his young charges was never shaken, and was more than justified over the course of the campaign as United recovered a 12-point deficit in January to win the title by four points.

With Ince, Hughes and Kanchelskis gone, many thought United would not be in the hunt for honours at all this season, but two key factors made sure they were. The first was the outstandiing performances of 'Fergie's Fledglings' Nicky Butt, Paul Scholes, David Beckham and Gary and Philip Neville. These rookies took on the responsibility of keeping United at the top, and succeeded perhaps even beyond Ferguson's wildest dreams.

The second factor was the return of Eric Cantona. His goal-scoring run in March and April propelled United to the summit, and deservedly earned him the Football Writers' Player of the Year award. Had he not been suspended for much of last season, United might have done better than runners-up in both the League and FA Cup.

With the title in the bag, United then faced Liverpool in the FA Cup Final in what was expected to be a classic encounter. The reality, however, was a turgid match in which Liverpool failed to perform at anything like their usual level. Only John Scales and, up until the goal, David James played with any sort of conviction, while United's players looked like they meant business from the kick-off. It was surprising, then, that they had to wait until six minutes from time for a goal, inevitably scored by Cantona, who was skippering the side in Steve Bruce's absence.

As Cantona climbed the steps to the Royal Box to receive the trophy, he was spat on by a few morons in the crowd, another example of the bad feeling which seems to dog United on their travels. Rival fans may argue that United are too rich, too big and too often the favoured party in 50-50 decisions, but their achievements speak for themselves.

Three titles, two FA Cups, the League Cup and the Cup-winners Cup have all been won since Ferguson arrived in 1986, making Manchester United the most successful club of the 1990s. More than that, they are the epitome of a modern football club, well-run, well-organised and forward-looking. Others may not like it, but with a young team that can only get better, they are going to have to get used to it.

The challenge for Ferguson now is Europe. United have performed poorly in their recent European campaigns, and much more will be expected of them in the Champions League next season.

Liverpool will enter the Cup-winners Cup, despite their poor showing at Wembley, with Newcastle, Aston Villa and Arsenal taking part in the UEFA Cup. Arsenal secured their place with a last-day victory over relegated Bolton, who have already lost defender Alan Stubbs to Celtic. QPR went the same way as Bolton, but on a dramatic final day, Coventry, Southampton and Sheffield Wednesday saved themselves, leaving Manchester City to fall through the trap door, despite a vain-glorious draw with Liverpool in their last game. These are hard times for City fans, facing an uncertain future in the Endsleigh League while their red rivals enjoy a summer basking in reflected glory and looking forward to Europe.

With the season barely over, the clubs began looking to 1996-97, with Middlesbrough making the first major move in the transfer market. Bryan Robson took his spending spree to £17m by signing Brazilian midfielder Emerson from FC Porto for £4.5million. Emerson, similar in style to his new boss, joins Branco and Juninho at the Riverside, and Boro are still on the trail of Denmark striker Mikkel Beck.

Chelsea, who lost manager Glenn Hoddle to England, have appointed Ruud Gullit as player-manager. But as soon as that was sorted out, the arguments between chairman Ken Bates and share-holder Matthew Harding resurfaced, once more threatening the harmony established by Hoddle at Stamford Bridge.

In the First Division, Sunderland duly clinched the title, with Derby County taking runners-up spot despite a nervous finish to the campaign. On the final day of the season, five clubs – Crystal Palace, Charlton, Stoke, Ipswich and Leicester – were in contention for the four play-off places. Ipswich's failure to beat relegated Millwall allowed Leicester, winners at Watford, who also went down, to leap-frog them in the table and take the final berth.

The play-off semi-finals produced two local derbies, with Palace proving too strong for Charlton, and Leicester narrowly too good for Stoke. That means a fourth trip to Wembley in five years for Leicester, who face a Palace side looking for their third promotion to the FA Premier League.

Scotland

A change for the better

A WORTHY and at times exhilarating challenge from Celtic was just not enough, and Rangers finally won their eighth successive Scottish Championship with one game to spare.

This made a refreshing change from the menu of recent seasons, when the title had been settled long before the final day, leaving fans with an unpalatable diet of meaningless matches in the weeks which followed.

The game in which Rangers mathematically secured the crown was a triumph for English international midfielder Paul Gascoigne, who scored a superb hat-trick in a convincing 3-1 defeat of Aberdeen at Ibrox.

Despite falling behind, Rangers powered to victory with two memorable individual efforts and a late penalty from Gazza, who has confirmed his intention to honour the remaining two years of his contract. Such news has been received with enthusiasm by Rangers fans, who are well aware that Gascoigne proved to be the difference between their own team and Celtic, who are now closing the gap between the sides with ominous speed.

"The season finished three months too soon for us," said Celtic manager Tommy Burns. "Having said that, we were three months into the season before some of the players realised that they were capable of winning the title."

Burns has made immediate moves to strengthen his already impressive squad with the acquisition of Alan Stubbs from Bolton for the huge fee of £5.5m.

ALAN FAIRLEY

Northern Ireland

McFall's climbers

PORTADOWN are the first champions of the new Premier League. Ronnie McFall's team clinched the title on the penultimate day of the League season when they beat mid-Ulster rivals Glenavon 2-1 at Shamrock Park.

Appropriately the man who scored the vital goal, from a penalty, was striker Garry Haylock, scorer of 20 League goals.

Crusaders had to concede the title when they slid to a tired defeat against Cliftonville. That result completed a miserable four days for Crusaders, who had been defeated in a replayed Irish Cup semi-final by Glentoran.

Glentoran deservedly won the Cup Final against Glenavon, who seemed to surrender when Glen Little hammered in a late goal from 25 yards.

ROY KITSON

Wales

Barry double hopes dashed

BARRY TOWN were worthy Welsh champions, finishing 17 points clear of Newtown.

The Dragons clinched the title with five games to go and now represent Wales in next season's UEFA Cup. But their hopes of a double were surprisingly dashed after losing on penalties to village side Llantsaintffraid in the Welsh Cup Final.

The relegation battle went to the wire with Llanelli and Afan Lido losing out.

A depleted and largely experimental Welsh side went down 2-0 to Switzerland, the last friendly before the World Cup qualifying campiagn begins against San Marino. The return of experienced players such as Hughes and Southall is a must.

MEL AP IOR THOMAS

Holland

Ajax take main prize

AJAX and PSV took the season's honours in Holland despite turmoil at personality level, where the champions saw their first "Bosman victims" slip off to Milan and Patrick Kluivert narrowly escape a prison term.

Ajax won the League title for the third season in succession while PSV – with Euro 96 outcast Wim Jonk in a starring role – thrashed Sparta Rotterdam in the Cup Final. Ajax bade farewell to their old De Meer stadium as well as to Milan-bound Michael Reiziger and Edgar Davids, while Kluivert was sentenced to 240 hours community service with a suspended three-month jail sentence after causing a fatal car crash last year.

Hat-trick heroes . . . Ajax take the League title for the third year running

Thousands of fans flocked to Amsterdam's city centre in tribute to Ajax after a 5-1 victory against Willem II provided them with the League title a week short of the season's end. A crashing half-volley by Finnish international Jari Litmanen after 17 minutes set Ajax on their way. Frank de Boer added a second just after the half-hour, followed swiftly by a third from Nigerian winger Finidi George, who rounded off an emphatic win by completing his hat-trick with a quick-fire double in the 70th and 72nd minutes. Jack de Gier scored a consolation goal for the Tilburg side with nine minutes left.

Ajax had begun the season in startling form, winning their first 12 matches, but faltered in January after the mid-season break. After a record run of 52 league games unbeaten, Ajax lost 1-0 to Willem II on January 14 and allowed PSV, under former national coach Dick Advocaat, to overtake them.

Both sides, dogged by injury and sidetracked by hopes of European glory – PSV progressed to the last eight of the UEFA Cup – slugged it out, but a 1-1 draw between them in Eindhoven on April 8 effectively ended PSV's hopes of taking the title for the first time in five years.

As for the De Meer stadium, it is to be knocked down to make way for a housing development and Ajax will move to the impressive 50,000 all-seater Amsterdam Arena in time for the start of next season. In the Cup Final, PSV defeated Sparta Rotterdam 5-2. PSV, beaten twice by Sparta in the League this season, stunned their opponents by scoring twice in the opening 13 minutes.

Goalkeeper Edward Metgod failed to hold a rasping 25-metre shot from Jonk in the ninth minute and Philip Cocu drove the rebound into the roof of the net. Jonk then provided the corner for Marciano Vink to head PSV's second. Sparta hauled themselves back into the game with a goal on the stroke of half-time, Dave van der Meer beating goalkeeper Ronald Waterreus with a shot into the top right-hand corner of the net.

PSV restored their two-goal lead in the 65th minute when Sparta defender John Veldman, who will replace Michael Reiziger at Ajax next season, headed a Vink cross into his own net. But Sparta refused to buckle, Dennis de Nooijer scoring their second from the penalty spot after Jaap Stam fouled Dennis Krijgsman. Jonk took central stage again three minutes from time, shooting home from close range. Bjorn van der Doelen finished the rout by scoring PSV's fifth in the dying seconds.

The final marked the last appearance of international midfielder Jan Wouters. He plans to join Utrecht's training staff.

Republic Of Ireand

Mixed luck for Gough

ALAN GOUGH was sent off but came back to triumph in the FAI Cup Final, and St Patrick's Athletic were denied their first League-Cup double when they lost the replay to Shelbourne.

There was a draw for the first time since the Cup Final was moved from Dalymount Park to Lansdowne Road, and it was the first time in 23 years a player had been sent off. Cork referee Pat Kelly, taking charge of his last game before retiring, had no alternative but to dismiss Shelbourne goalkeeper Alan Gough when he handled outside the penalty area.

Midfielder Brian Flood did a good job between the posts and a week later Shels took the Cup 2-1, with Gough saving a penalty. Stephen Geoghegan, top scorer in the Premier Division with 19 goals, got the winner.

Bohemians and Sligo Rovers will be the FAI National League's two other European representatives next season. Galway United and Drogheda were automatically relegated and Athlone Town also went down, losing the play-off against Home Farm-Everton.

Bray Wanderers and Finn Harps took the automatic promotion places. Bray have played in the top flight before, but it will be a first for Harps.

The end of the season has brought the usual list of resignations. Jim McLaughlin has quit Drogheda and the speculation is that he will return to his first club, Dundalk; Pat Byrne has left St James's Gate and could be on his way back to Shamrock Rovers as general manager; and John Cleary has quit struggling Longford Town for the second time.

SEAN CREEDON

Luxembourg

Down to the wire

THE penultimate week of the National Division saw defending champions and leaders Jeunesse Esch play long-time rivals CS Grevenmacher.

The game, which attracted Grevenmacher's biggest crowd of the season, 3,824, ended in a 1-1 draw, so the championship goes down to the final week.

Jeunesse play Beggen and Grevenmacher travel to CS Petange, who need a win to stay up. Union are third and have a very remote chance of taking the title.

Red Boys are the first team to be relegated but still have a chance of a Cup-winners Cup place. They play Jeunesse in one semi-final of the cup, and the winners will meet either Wormldange or Union in the final.

● Liechtenstein's national side started their qualifying games for the World Cup in disappointing fashion, losing 3-0 to Macedonia in Skopje.

TIM BRICE

Finland

Inter take over

PROMOTED Inter, of Turku, are the surprise of the new Finnish season, remaining undefeated after five games.

Inter were formed only in 1990 and from the beginning set out to challenge rivals TPS Turku. Their best-known players are former international defender Erkka Petaja and English stopper Steven Pollack.

HJK Helsinki, suffering from injuries, pulled themselves together to beat Rovaniemi 3-2 in the League Cup Final.

Feelings have been running high at FC Jazz, where new coach Jari Pyykola has consistently ignored Brazilian star, Rodrigo, saying that he does not defend enough.

Striker Kai Nyyssonen has moved from FC Haka to Belgium's RWD Molenbeek, on a three-year contract.

PENTTI HIETANEN

Sweden

Helsingborg on fire

HELSINGBORG and IFK Gothenburg have set the early pace. Helsingborg, five wins out of five, have been firing on all cylinders, with strikers Magnus Powell and Martin Pringle in an unstoppable mood.

Promoted teams Oddevold and Umea, where veteran English forward Steve Galloway is still going strong, have also started well.

The national team recorded three straight victories, over Northern Ireland, Slovakia and South Korea, but the media have been critical of the policy of friendlies against only lesser opponents.

Midfielder Klas Ingesson is back to his best having found new life with Bari. "Italy has done me a world of good," he says. "The training concentrates on skills and controlling the ball in tight situations. It is just what I need. I already know how to run and work."

PENTTI HIETANEN

Bosnia-Hercegovina Football is back at Grbavica

THE FIRST football match to be staged in Sarajevo's Grbavica stadium for four years was a dismal draw, but that was not too important.

What mattered was that soccer was back, even though fans had to get to the arena along specially-designated walkways in case any mines remained hidden.

The central part of the stand had been burned during the civil war, and the stadium had been used by snipers.

The match, between Sarajevo and Zeljeznicar, drew a crowd of 12,000, including President Izetbegovic. This was the first game to be staged at Grbavica since 1992, although others have been played at Kosovo's Olympic Stadium, where part of the surrounding area has been turned into ....a cemetery.

The new Bosnia-Hercegovina national team drew 0-0 with Albania before a 15,000 crowd in Zenica. Plans for a match against Italy have been dropped for security reasons.

ZDRAVKO REIC

Playing again . . . Sarajevo take on Zeljeznicar at Grbavica stadium

Bulgaria
Slavia's title at last

SLAVIA SOFIA are not only the champions for the first time since the middle of the Second World War, but they achieved the League and Cup double a week before the season ended.

The 83-year-old club's success was not without controversy. In the space of three days both domestic honours went to the country's most popular club, something not appreciated by President Laftchis of Levski, who called his team off the pitch shortly before the whistle in the Cup Final, which Slavia were leading through a Kirov goal.

Laftchis claimed he was protesting against corruption, and the Football Union took umbridge. Curious fines were imposed – less than £1,000 per club and less than £1,000 for Laftchis, for "abusing the FA in public", while two Levski and two Slavia players were suspended.

On the day the Championship ended, Slavia at last received the Cup, too. The final was awarded by committee to Slavia, 4-0. Jubilant Slavia coach, Stoyan Kotzev, said: "Now we have both at once!"

Defending champions Levski were second in the table and Lok third, but something needs to be done to restore respectability to the domestic game.

The national team could not score in the Trnava friendly against Slovakia. The hosts were the better side in the first half, Penev's stuttering team being unable to cause any difficulties at the back. A last-minute chance nearly gave the visitors an undeserved victory.

With Euro 96 due to begin, Bulgaria were not much further forward, having been able to play only Macedonia and the United Arab Emirates.

BOB VAUGHAN

Hungary BVSC still lead

WITHOUT involvement in Euro 96 and with the Olympics some way off, interest has been concentrated on the championship finale.

Hungary's First Division is not the attraction it once was and as the leaders entered the final straight the question was whether the Dreher-sponsored BVSC could hang on to their lead to take their first championship.

A narrow win over Haladas while Ferencvaros were taking full points from a home game with Vac meant BVSC's lead remained five points.

But "Fradi" still might overtake BVSC, now managed by former national coach Gyorgy Mezei.

New national coach Janos Csank had the friendlies with England and Italy as a guide to the players he will be calling on for the World Cup qualifyiers.

This daunting task begins in earnest against Finland in Budapest on September 1.

BOB VAUGHAN

Czech Republic
Maier set to move

SLAVIA is the name, as in Bulgaria. They duly clinched the title after 49 years, despite losing 3-0 in Drnovice.

Sigma also lost and in the end Sparta were left way behind and with no European competition next season.

Slavia, founded in 1893, won the title nine times between 1925 and 1937, but had not done so again since 1947.

There is a poor outlook for Sparta fans, who began the season, like the team, on top of the Bohemian football world. About the only chink of light is the likelihood that when keeper Kouba finally goes abroad, late developer Maier of Liberec, "Ladislav the Hero", will be moving to replace him next season.

Maier, one of the reasons Slovan have done so well in the League this season, also may be challenging Kouba for the number one spot at Euro 96. Miklosko is out of the reckoning, Srnicek ended the season in the reserves, and Kouba's team have not been winning.

Coach Dusan Uhrin must have Maier pencilled in, and an appearance in the last friendly, in Salzburg, could result in a close call as to who guards the Czech nets at Old Trafford on June 9.

After Euro 96 thoughts will turn to the Champions League and how Slavia can strengthen their squad.

Suchoparek has thoughts of playing abroad, though not at Ibrox – Rangers seem more interested in national team colleagues Kadlec and Hapal – and hanging on to the players who took the club to a first European semi-final may prove as difficult as signing new recruits.

BOB VAUGHAN

Ukraine

Appeal follows Cup upset

SHAKHTYOR DONETSK have appealed to the Ukraine Football Federation after being knocked out of the Cup in the semi-finals.

They lost to lowly Niva Vinnitsa after six of their players had been taken to hospital on the morning of the match, all suffering from stomach pains.

The game was called off, but officials refused Shakhtyor's request for a week's postponement, and ruled that it must take place the next day. Shakhtyor, without the six, made it to extra time, but eventually lost after a penalty shoot-out.

Niva thus went through to meet Kiev Dynamo, who beat Kremin 2-0 in the other semi-final and are on course for a League and Cup double.

If they manage it they will go into the Champions Cup and Niva – who narrowly avoided relegation last season – will play in the Cup-winners Cup, irrespective of the result in the final.

The national team, looking ahead to the World Cup qualifiers, drew 2-2 with Moldova and lost 3-2 to Turkey.

OLEG ZADERNOVSKY

Slovakia

Pecze's pride

The man behind Trnava's revival is poised to take them back into Europe

TRNAVA'S efforts were in vain, and the title proved a one-horse race, with Slovan Bratislava winning for the third time in succession. Karol Pecze's Trnava lost their last hope when they could only draw with FC Kosice.

Nevertheless, Pecze, the former Gyor and Cracow boss, can look back with pride on his two seasons at Trnava, where crowds have been good and the team were transformed from relegation candidates to UEFA Cup candidates.

Lowly opposition should mean a Cup win and Cup-winners Cup qualification, which will evoke memories of Trnava's great days in the Champions Cup, when Derby County and Ajax were given a run for their money.

The national team did well in a friendly with Sweden, the thickness of a goalpost depriving them of a draw.

Now Slovakia face a friendly with Mexico at Soldier Field in Chicago, a slightly ludicrous enterprise involving a day's flying, a night's rest, the match and immediate return. The economic managers have a big say in arranging such ventures, but whether it helps preparation for the opening match in the World Cup qualifiers is another matter. That involves another long haul, to the Faroe Islands on the last day of August.

BOB VAUGHAN

Poland

Stachurski out after six months

National coach leaves after failing to win a game in charge

NATIONAL TEAM coach Wladyslaw Stachurski has quit. He was appointed in December last year as successor to Henryk Apostel, who resigned after Poland's unsuccessful Euro 96 qualifying campaign, but he fared even worse.

After a 5-0 defeat by Japan in a friendly in Hong Kong, Poland lost 2-1 to Croatia in Rijeka, then drew 0-0 with Slovenia and 1-1 with Belarus.

Stachurski said: "Our fans expected us to win and to play much better. Unfortunately, it did not happen. So I decided to resign."

Antoni Piechniczek has taken over for the second time. He played in midfield and defence for Zryw Chorzow and Naprzod Lipiny before joining Legia in 1961, and moved to Ruch Chorzow four years later. Piechniczek won the domestic League and Cup double with Legia in 1964, the League title with Ruch in 1968, and was capped three times.

As a coach he took Poland to third place in the 1982 World Cup and to the Mexico finals in 1986. Later he coached national teams in Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates.

He has a difficult task. Poland have not won an official game since June 1995, and he is pressed for time. He must build a new team for the first World Cup 98 qualifying game against England on October 9.

On the domestic front, Legia Warsaw, last season's champions, and Widzew Lodz are battling for the title. Both have 78 points, three more than third-placed Hutnik Krakow. Widzew's Marek Koniarek is top scorer with 23 goals.

Widzew play lowly GKS Belchatow in one Cup semi-final and Second Division club Ruch Chorzow meet Third Division Pogon Olesnica in the other.

DARIUSZ KUROWSKI

No-win situation . . . Wladyslaw Stachurski

IN BRIEF

Croatia

Hajduk team earn mystery bonus

HAJDUK SPLIT players are thought to have gained a bonus of about £10,000 each after winning their last match of the season.

If Hajduk had lost, at home to Varteks, then FC Croatia would have finished second and Varteks would have been champions.

Instead, Hajduk won by the only goal, to the delight of FC Croatia fans (who include President Tudjman), so "FC" were champions, Hajduk second and Varteks third.

The source of the bonus is the subject of much speculation.

ZDRAVKO REIC

Slovenia

Hit still hot

FC HIT, the new club set up in Nova Gorica, seem sure to win the Slovenian championship.

Hit's win over Izola, coupled with Olimpija Ljubljana's defeat by Maribor Branik, widened the gap at the top to six points with only four games left.

Police had to break up fights between rival fans during the match in Maribor.

ZDRAVKO REIC

Romania

Double up for Steaua

WITH the League honours already in their pocket, Steaua went into the Cup Final against Gloria Bistrita confident of the double, and duly brought it off.

Gloria went ahead through Miszti a minute before half-time but Stan put things right for Steaua with the equaliser on the hour, and further goals from Bucur and Gilca produced the expected result.

Steaua now go in to Champions League, Gloria compete in the Cup-winners Cup and FC National and Rapid go into the UEFA Cup.

Inter Sibiu not only lost their Cup semi-final, to Steaua, but were relegated along with Poli of Jasi.

BOB VAUGHAN

Greece
AEK cash in

AFTER 13 years AEK Athens have won the Greek Cup again, in a most convincing way, and collected a £28,000 bonus per man.

Coach Dusan Bajevic's squad trounced Apollo Athens 7-1 before 35,000 fans at the Olympic Stadium.

Three of the goals were scored by Vaslils Tsartas, two by Daniel Batlata, and the others by Timour Ketzpaya and Christos Kostis.

Bernard Barniac scored for Apollo in the 78th minute.

The contest was the most one-sided in the 49-year history of the Greek Cup, breaking the record set by Olympiakos Piraeus in 1947, when they trounced Iraklis Thessaloniki 6-0.

The big question for AEK fans now is, will Bajevic stay? Rumours have it that he will be going to arch rivals Olympiakos, but he says nothing has been decided.

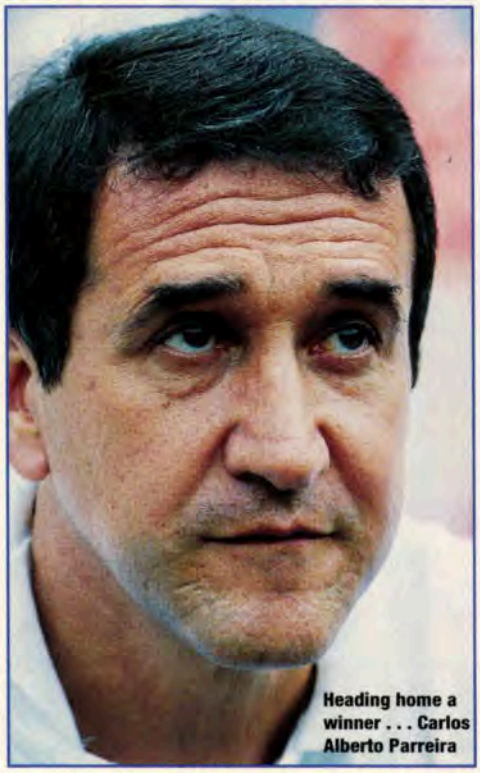
The Greek national team looked sluggish as they beat Georgia 2-1 at home in a tune-up for World Cup qualifying.

Two goals by Demis Nikolaidis lifted the Greeks in front of 8,000 fans in the rural city of Ioannina.

Nikolaidis, who now plays for Apollon, is rumoured heading for Olympiakos.

LOU ECONOMOPOLOUS

Turkey
Fenerbahce sweep to the top



Heading home a winner . . . Carlos Alberto Parreira

FIVE victories in the last five matches of the season enabled Fenerbahce to win the championship by two points from Trabzonspor – giving Carlos Alberto Parreira a trophy in his first season in Turkey.

This is the club's 13th title, but their first since 1989, and the bad news for fans is that Parreira will not be staying. His wife has had problems with her health, and the couple plan to return to Brazil. Parreira will be replaced by another former Brazil national team coach, Sebastiano Lazaroni.

Meanwhile, Christoph Daum, has left Besiktas and will be replaced by Rasim Kara, assistant to national coach Fatih Terim. Kara is on a two-year contract worth $800,000 a year.

Kara is the first Turk to coach Besiktas for 15 years.

In turn, Terim will replace the departing Graeme Souness at Galatasaray after the European Championships, on a four-year contract worth the same as Kara's. And in yet another managerial move, former Besiktas chief Gordon Milne is returning to Turkey to take over Bursaspor, for £1million over two years.

Trabzonspor lost only four matches out of 34, but two of them were at home in rounds 30 and 32, by the only goal to lowly Vanspor and then by the odd goal in three against Fenerbahce,

That put Parreira's team them two points ahead with two games to play, and both clubs won both their closing fixtures. So Fenerbahce, who lost only twice, finished with 84 points to 82.

"The victory in Trabzon was crucial," said Parreira. "Now I feel like I did when Brazil won the World Cup two years ago. It's a joy I'll never forget."

Cannakkale and Sarlyer are promoted, with a third club still to be decided after the playoffs. Kayserispor, Eskisehirspor and Karsiyaka are relegated.

The managerial upheaval and the continual urge for success will lead to considerable transfer activity during the close season. Players who are going include Welsh international Saunders, who is following Souness out of Galatasaray, and Atkinson, surplus to requirements at Fenerbahce.

Turkey will have four clubs in the major European events next season - the champions, Gala in the Cup-winners Cup, and Trabzon and Besiktas in the UEFA Cup, plus Kocaeli and Gaziantep in the InterToto Cup.

HASAN CEMALI

Albania
Double up

TIRANA came from behind to retain their Albanian title in the last minute of the last match, and then rode their luck by winning the Cup as well.

Teuta needed a point to be sure of success, but lost away to Partizani, with Skerdilajd Curri scoring the winner in the final seconds. Meanwhile Tirana beat Albpetrol 5-1 to finish on 55 points, one in front. This was their 16th championship.

Partizani were third with 46 and Flamurtari fourth with 45. Altin Cuko of Lacis was top goalscorer, on 21.

In the Cup Final, Tirana had better luck than last year, when they missed four penalties in the shoot-out and lost 4-3 to Teuta. This time, against Flamurtari, they won by the odd shot in nine, thanks to a save by Blendi Nallbani.

GEZIM NUSHI

Malta
Sliema sweep

"WE LOOK to the future with optimism," said Sliema Wanderers chairman Robert Arrigo soon after his side became Malta's champions for the 23rd time.

The duo of team manager John Calleja and English player-coach Mark Miller played the major part in the club's success.

"Discipline is one of the most important elements needed," remarked Miller, who is chasing a unique record by winning the double with three clubs on the island.

Muscat crowned a fine season by pipping Valletta's Doncic for the top scoring spot with his 18th goal of the season, seconds from the end of Sliema's final 3-1 fixture over Birkirkara Luxol.

DOMENICO AQUILINA

How they finished

CYPRUS - *FINAL TABLE*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
APOEL Nicosia	26	19	7	0	65	21	64
Anorthosis	26	16	7	3	50	23	55
Omonia Nicosia	26	16	5	5	66	30	53
AEK Larnaca	26	16	5	5	44	21	53
Apollon Limassol	26	10	10	6	42	29	40
Ethnikos	26	9	10	7	36	33	37
Paralimni	26	8	9	9	37	40	33
Salamina	26	10	3	13	37	48	33
Aris Limassol	26	7	10	9	34	36	31
Alki Larnaca	26	8	7	11	42	46	31
Olympiakos	26	8	6	12	24	32	30
AEL Limassol	26	6	6	14	37	49	24
Evaghoras	26	2	7	17	21	59	13
Omonia Aradippou	26	0	2	24	18	86	2

CZECH REP – *FINAL TABLE*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Slavia Prague	30	23	1	6	68	28	70
Sigma Olomouc	30	19	4	7	54	33	61
FK Jablonec	30	16	5	9	45	26	53
Sparta Prague	30	14	7	9	56	35	49
Petra Drnovice	30	14	6	10	53	40	48
Kaucuk Opava	30	13	7	10	40	34	46
Slovan Liberec	30	12	8	10	34	30	44
Boby Brno	30	12	7	11	39	42	43
Viktoria Plzen	30	11	6	13	33	34	39
Viktoria Zizkov	30	9	10	11	38	43	37
Ceske Budejovice	30	10	7	13	35	47	37
Banik Ostrava	30	10	5	15	40	45	35
Union Cheb	30	8	9	13	35	47	33
Hradec Kralove	30	8	5	17	28	46	29
Svit Zlin	30	6	9	15	17	38	27
JOKO	30	3	8	19	19	65	17

ENGLAND – *FINAL TABLE*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	38	25	7	6	73	35	82
Newcastle	38	24	6	8	66	37	78
Liverpool	38	20	11	7	70	34	71
Aston Villa	38	18	9	11	52	35	63
Arsenal	38	17	12	9	49	32	63
Everton	38	17	10	11	64	44	61
Blackburn	38	18	7	13	61	47	61
Tottenham	38	16	13	9	50	38	61
Nottm. Forest	38	15	13	10	50	54	58
West Ham	38	14	9	15	43	52	51
Chelsea	38	12	14	12	46	44	50
Middlesbrough	38	11	10	17	35	50	43
Leeds Utd	38	12	7	19	40	57	43
Wimbledon	38	10	11	17	55	70	41
Sheffield Wed	38	10	10	18	48	61	40
Coventry	38	8	14	16	42	60	38
Southampton	38	9	11	18	34	52	38
Man City	38	9	11	18	33	58	38
QPR	38	9	6	23	38	57	33
Bolton	38	8	5	25	39	71	29

FRANCE – *FINAL TABLE*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Auxerre	38	22	6	10	66	30	72
Paris SG	38	19	11	8	65	36	68
Monaco	38	19	11	8	64	38	68
Metz	38	18	11	9	42	30	65
Lens	38	16	15	7	44	31	63
Montpellier	38	17	9	12	51	40	60
Nantes	38	14	13	11	44	42	55
Rennes	38	13	15	10	43	41	54
Guingamp	38	13	14	11	34	33	53
Strasbourg	38	14	12	12	46	44	51
Lyon	38	10	18	10	40	42	48
Nice	38	12	9	17	37	44	45
Le Havre	38	11	12	15	33	45	45
Cannes	38	12	8	18	45	50	44
Bastia	38	12	8	18	45	55	44
Bordeaux	38	11	9	18	44	51	42
Lille	38	9	12	17	27	50	39
Gueugnon	38	8	14	16	27	46	38
St Etienne	38	6	16	16	36	59	34
Martigues	38	9	7	22	30	59	34

GERMANY – *FINAL TABLE*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bor. Dortmund	34	19	11	4	76	38	68
Bayern Munich	34	19	5	10	66	45	62
Schalke	34	14	14	6	45	36	56
Borussia MG	34	15	8	11	52	51	53
SV Hamburg	34	12	14	8	52	47	50
Hansa Rostock	34	13	10	11	47	43	49
Karlsruhe	34	12	12	10	53	46	48
1860 Munich	34	11	12	11	52	46	45
Werder Bremen	34	10	14	10	39	42	44
VfB Stuttgart	34	10	13	11	59	62	43
SC Freiburg	34	11	9	14	30	41	42
Koln	34	9	13	12	33	35	40
Fort. Dusseldorf	34	8	16	10	40	47	40
Bayer Leverkusen	34	8	14	12	37	38	38
St Pauli	34	9	11	14	43	51	38
Kaiserslautern	34	6	18	10	31	37	36
Ein. Frankfurt	34	7	11	16	43	68	32
KFC Uerdingen	34	5	11	18	33	57	26

SCOTLAND – *FINAL TABLE*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	36	27	6	3	85	25	87
Celtic	36	24	11	1	74	25	83
Aberdeen	36	16	7	13	52	45	55
Hearts	36	16	7	13	55	53	55
Hibernian	36	11	10	15	43	57	43
Raith Rovers	36	12	7	17	41	57	43
Kilmarnock	36	11	8	17	39	54	41
Motherwell	36	9	12	15	28	39	39
Partick Thistle	36	8	6	22	29	62	30
Falkirk	36	6	6	24	31	60	24

HOLLAND – *FINAL TABLE*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ajax	34	26	5	3	97	24	83
PSV Eindhoven	34	24	5	5	97	25	77
Feyenoord	34	18	9	7	66	36	63
Roda JC	34	15	12	7	51	35	57
Vitesse Arnhem	34	15	8	11	48	44	53
Sparta Rotterdam	34	14	11	9	53	53	53
SC Heerenveen	34	14	11	9	66	68	53
NAC Breda	34	14	10	10	58	44	52
FC Groningen	34	12	13	9	48	45	49
FC Twente	34	14	6	14	46	55	48
RKC Waalwijk	34	11	11	12	44	44	44
Willem II	34	9	12	13	53	59	39
Fortuna Sittard	34	6	13	15	27	54	31
De Graafschap	34	6	11	17	37	66	29
FC Utrecht	34	6	10	18	27	59	28
FC Volendam	34	6	9	19	29	65	27
NEC Nijmegen	34	6	7	21	33	73	25
GA Eagles	34	5	7	22	40	71	22

ITALY – *FINAL TABLE*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Milan	34	21	10	3	60	24	73
Juventus	34	19	8	7	58	35	65
Lazio	34	17	8	9	66	38	59
Fiorentina	34	17	8	9	53	41	59
AS Roma	34	16	10	8	51	34	58
Parma	34	16	10	8	44	31	58
Internazionale	34	15	9	10	51	30	54
Sampdoria	34	14	10	10	59	47	52
Vicenza	34	13	10	11	36	37	49
Udinese	34	11	8	15	41	49	41
Cagliari	34	11	8	15	34	47	41
Napoli	34	10	11	13	38	41	41
Atalanta	34	11	6	17	38	50	39
Piacenza	34	9	10	15	31	48	37
Bari	34	8	8	18	48	71	32
Torino	34	6	11	17	28	46	29
Cremonese	34	5	12	17	37	57	27
Padova	34	7	3	24	41	79	24

LUXEMBOURG – *FINAL TABLE*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jeunesse Esch	22	15	3	4	59	19	48
Grevenmacher	22	14	5	3	44	19	47
Union	22	12	6	4	43	18	42
F91 Dudelange	22	11	5	6	43	23	38
Sporting Mertzig	22	11	4	7	32	29	37
Avenir Beggen	22	9	4	9	38	33	31
Spora	22	7	6	9	35	34	27
FC Rodange	22	7	3	12	22	36	24
FC Wiltz	22	7	3	12	25	41	24
Aris Bonnevoie	22	5	6	11	32	52	21
CS Petange	22	6	1	14	20	49	19
Red Boys	22	3	4	15	29	72	13

PORTUGAL – *FINAL TABLE*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Porto	34	26	6	2	84	20	84
Benfica	34	22	7	5	57	27	73
Sporting Lisbon	34	19	10	5	69	27	67
Boavista	34	19	8	7	58	28	65
Vit. Guimaraes	34	19	5	10	55	39	62
Belenenses	34	14	9	11	53	33	51
Sporting Braga	34	12	9	13	44	47	45
Uniao Leiria	34	13	6	15	37	50	45
Maritimo	34	12	7	15	39	53	43
Farense	34	10	6	18	36	45	36
Salgueiros	34	7	15	12	39	49	36
Estrela Amadora	34	7	15	12	35	49	36
Gil Vicente	34	9	9	16	31	49	36
Desp. Chaves	34	9	7	18	38	56	34
Leca	34	9	7	18	29	54	34
Felgueiras	34	8	9	17	29	47	33
Campomaiorense	34	10	3	21	32	69	33
Tirsense	34	7	10	17	30	53	31

TURKEY – *FINAL TABLE*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce	34	26	6	2	68	19	84
Trabzonspor	34	26	4	4	79	24	82
Besiktas	34	22	3	9	74	46	69
Galatasaray	34	21	5	8	67	38	68
Kocaelispor	34	16	11	7	61	43	59
Gaziantepspor	34	14	7	13	42	43	49
Antalyaspor	34	13	6	15	45	55	45
Samsunspor	34	12	7	15	46	46	43
Bursaspor	34	10	11	13	56	48	41
Genclerbirligi	34	10	11	13	41	48	41
Ankaragucu	34	10	7	17	36	56	37
Altay	34	9	9	16	35	56	36
Istanbulspor	34	8	11	15	46	57	35
Vanspor	34	8	11	15	32	50	35
Denizlispor	34	8	10	16	38	50	34
Kayserispor	34	7	11	16	41	61	32
Eskisehirspor	34	10	2	22	40	68	32
Karsiyaka	34	7	6	21	26	65	27

YUGOSLAVIA – *FINAL TABLE*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Partizan	18	13	3	2	51	17	60
Red Star	18	9	5	4	27	16	48
Vojvodina	18	8	6	4	33	19	43
Becej	18	9	6	3	18	19	41
Mladost (L)	18	8	2	8	24	27	32
Cukaricki	18	3	6	8	23	23	29
Rad	18	5	5	8	21	23	28
Proleter	18	6	3	9	24	28	27
Radnicki (N)	18	4	5	9	19	37	26
Sloboda	18	2	3	13	10	41	14

How they stand

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rapid Wien	33	20	6	7	63	37	66
Sturm Graz	33	19	6	8	57	30	63
FC Tirol	34	17	7	10	60	38	58
GAK	33	14	12	7	41	31	54
Austria Wien	34	14	8	12	40	31	50
Linzer ASK	34	13	8	13	34	32	47
SV Ried	33	10	12	11	40	48	42
SV Salzburg	34	9	14	11	48	48	41
Admira Wacker	34	6	13	15	32	58	31
Vorwarts Steyr	34	0	6	28	25	87	6

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Brugge	34	25	6	3	83	30	81
Anderlecht	34	22	5	7	83	37	71
Ekeren	34	15	8	11	53	37	53
Lierse	34	14	10	10	54	45	52
Standard Liege	34	13	12	9	51	46	51
RWD Molenbeek	33	12	14	7	38	29	50
Charleroi	34	13	11	10	59	53	50
Cercle Bruges	34	13	10	11	51	46	49
Lommel	34	14	6	14	40	45	48
Eendracht Aalst	34	12	10	12	55	50	46
Mechelen	34	12	8	14	40	46	44
Harelbeke	34	13	4	17	40	48	43
Antwerp	34	11	9	14	38	46	42
Gent	34	10	11	13	38	49	41
St Truiden	34	11	7	16	42	60	40
Seraing	33	8	5	20	35	74	29
Beveren	34	6	9	19	38	57	27
Waregem	34	4	9	21	30	70	21

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AGF Arhus	31	17	11	3	58	27	62
Brondby	31	18	7	6	65	32	61
OB Odense	31	16	8	7	54	31	56
Lyngby	31	14	10	7	60	32	52
AaB Alborg	31	15	5	11	56	35	50
FC Copenhagen	31	13	9	9	47	43	48
Silkeborg	31	14	6	11	42	39	48
Viborg	31	8	10	13	46	66	34
Vejle	31	7	8	16	28	49	29
Ikast	31	5	9	17	28	56	24
Herfolge	31	5	8	18	34	61	23
Naestved	31	5	7	19	28	75	22

FINLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter	6	5	1	0	8	1	16
FC Jazz	5	3	1	1	11	7	10
FinnPa	6	2	2	2	8	6	8
TPS Turku	5	2	1	2	8	8	7
MyPa	5	2	1	2	7	7	7
MP Mikkeli	5	2	1	2	4	4	7
Ilves Tampere	5	2	1	2	5	7	7
HJK Helsinki	5	2	1	2	3	5	7
RoPS	5	1	2	2	5	4	5
Haka	5	1	2	2	5	6	5
Jaro	5	1	1	3	3	7	4
VPS	5	1	0	4	3	8	3

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Panathinaikos	32	25	5	2	68	19	80
AEK Athens	32	23	6	3	79	21	75
Olympiakos	32	19	7	6	63	30	64
Heraklis	32	15	7	10	46	36	52
OFI Crete	32	15	6	11	54	51	51
Skoda-Xanthi	32	12	9	11	51	45	45
Athinaikos	32	12	8	12	32	39	44
Edessaikos	32	12	7	13	46	53	43
Ionikos	32	11	9	12	41	48	42
Apollon	32	11	7	14	50	44	40
Aris Salonika	32	10	10	12	36	45	40
PAOK Salonika	32	10	10	12	37	39	37
Paniliakos	32	9	10	13	41	47	37
Kalamata	32	8	12	12	38	45	36
Panahaiki	32	9	6	17	26	46	33
Panionios	32	9	5	18	33	54	32
Larissa	32	7	7	18	26	60	28
Ethnikos	32	5	3	24	37	82	18

NORWAY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lillestrom	9	6	2	1	21	10	20
Molde	9	5	1	3	21	9	16
Viking Stavanger	9	4	4	1	17	8	16
Skeid Oslo	9	5	1	3	13	12	16
Rosenborg	8	4	2	2	22	8	14
Stabaek	8	3	4	1	16	11	13
Brann	8	3	3	2	12	17	12
Tromso	8	3	2	3	10	10	11
Stromsgodset	9	2	3	4	10	17	9
Bodo/Glimt	9	2	2	5	12	16	8
Kongsvinger	8	2	2	4	8	18	8
Valerengen	9	2	1	6	8	15	7
IK Start	8	2	1	5	10	18	7
Moss	9	1	4	4	6	17	7

POLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Legia Warsaw	30	25	3	2	84	19	78
Widzew Lodz	30	24	6	0	76	19	78
Hutnik Krakow	30	14	6	10	45	40	48
LKS Lodz	30	11	10	9	35	33	43
Amica Wronki	30	12	7	11	32	34	43
Stomil Olsztyn	30	12	6	12	29	36	42
R. Czestochowa	30	11	7	12	29	28	40
Lech Poznan	30	10	10	10	40	33	40
GKS Katowice	30	10	9	11	34	34	39
Zaglebie Lubin	30	9	11	10	30	31	38
Pogon Szczecin	30	10	8	12	30	36	38
Gornik Zabrze	30	9	11	10	41	48	38
Slask Wroclaw	30	8	13	9	35	36	37
Sokol Tychy	30	8	10	12	28	38	34
GKS Belchatow	30	9	5	16	36	53	32
L-O Gdansk	30	8	6	16	29	55	30
Stal Mielec	30	8	4	18	31	53	28
Siarka Tarnobrzeg	30	3	6	21	21	59	15

RUSSIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alania V'kavkaz	13	9	2	2	25	12	29
Moscow Spartak	12	8	3	1	21	5	27
CSKA Moscow	13	8	3	2	22	11	27
Rotor Volgograd	13	7	5	1	19	7	26
Moscow Dynamo	13	6	6	1	19	7	24
Lok. NN	13	6	2	5	12	17	20
Krylya SS	13	5	5	3	10	8	20
Lok. Moscow	13	4	6	3	10	9	18
Moscow Torpedo	13	4	5	4	15	16	17
Rostselmash	13	4	4	5	19	18	16
Zenit St Petersburg	13	4	4	5	12	13	16
Baltika Kaliningrad	13	3	7	3	15	18	16
Lada Togliatti	13	2	4	7	6	18	10
Tekstilshchik	13	1	7	5	7	11	10
Chernomorets	13	2	3	8	11	20	9
Kamaz Chelny	13	2	3	8	10	20	9
Zhemchuzhina	12	2	3	7	9	22	9
Uralmash	13	1	5	7	10	18	8

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atletico Madrid	41	25	9	7	73	32	84
Valencia	41	26	4	11	76	50	82
Barcelona	41	22	13	6	70	37	79
Espanyol	41	20	13	8	63	36	73
Tenerife	41	19	12	10	67	54	69
Real Madrid	41	19	10	12	74	51	67
Real Betis	41	16	14	11	60	51	62
La Coruna	41	16	12	13	61	42	60
Real Sociedad	41	16	12	13	59	51	60
Compostela	41	17	7	17	47	54	58
Celta Vigo	41	12	15	14	48	50	51
Real Zaragoza	41	11	15	15	51	58	48
Real Oviedo	41	12	12	17	47	64	48
Racing Santander	41	11	14	16	45	66	47
Sporting Gijon	41	13	7	21	51	58	46
Athletic Bilbao	41	10	15	16	41	54	45
Sevilla	41	10	15	16	40	54	45
Real Valladolid	41	10	14	17	54	61	44
Rayo Vallecano	41	12	8	21	46	72	44
Albacete	41	10	12	19	55	79	42
Merida	41	9	12	20	34	61	39
Salamanca	41	8	9	24	52	79	33

SWEDEN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Helsingborg	6	5	1	0	14	4	16
IFK Gothenburg	6	4	2	0	12	3	14
IFK Norrkoping	6	3	2	1	12	6	11
Halmstad	6	3	2	1	8	6	11
Malmo	5	3	1	1	7	2	10
Oddevold	6	3	0	3	7	8	9
Oster Vaxjo	6	2	2	2	7	8	8
Orgryte	6	2	1	3	4	5	7
Djurgarden	6	2	1	3	6	8	7
Umea	6	2	1	3	6	8	7
Trelleborg	6	2	0	4	7	10	6
AIK Stockholm	6	1	1	4	4	9	4
Orebro	6	1	1	4	4	9	4
Degerfors	5	0	1	4	5	17	1

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Grasshopper	13	8	5	0	23	4	51
Sion	13	7	2	4	17	12	44
Neuchatel Xamax	13	5	6	2	18	13	42
FC Aarau	13	6	4	3	19	15	36
Lucerne	12	4	2	6	20	15	34
Servette	13	2	5	6	18	23	25
FC Basel	12	2	3	7	8	19	24
St Gallen	13	2	3	8	8	30	23

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Paying off

Fans flock to the 'TV Games'

Danger man . . . Argentina's Ariel Ortega tussles with Bolivia's Oscar Sanchez

AROUND 225,000 spectators watched the opening round of four games out of the 72 to be played in the South American World Cup qualifying tournament.

Apart from that there was an incalculable television audience. In Argentina, the transmission of that country's game with Bolivia had the highest rating of any programme for years, which at least justified the new format, which involves nine nations – Brazil qualify automatically – playing each other home and away.

On the field, there were no surprises.

South American champions Uruguay had a comparatively comfortable 2-0 victory in Venezuela, where soccer is not the most popular sport and the attendance was only 10,000 – making those at the other three games all the more noteworthy.

Uruguay's Daniel Fonseca was sent off (for playing on after the whistle had blown for offside), but Uruguay managed with 10 men for the last five minutes.

Enzo Francescoli stuck to his word that he was retiring after winning the South American title with Uruguay last year, although coach Hector Nunez did everything to lure him back. First, Nunez wanted him as assistant coach (with the intention of pushing him into the line-up), then picked his River Plate team-mate, Gabriel Cedres, and got him to try and persuade Francescoli to play.

Ecuador, playing good soccer under new Colombian coach Francisco Maturana, gained the biggest win, beating Peru 4-1 at home. Peru's departure from Lima was delayed by a bomb scare on the plane. They had not played a single warm-up match . . . and it showed.

Colombia, with much the same team who disappointed at USA 1994, beat a defensive Paraguay 1-0 in Barranquilla. The Colombians, with Carlos Valderrama going back on his decision to retire from international soccer, had an average age of over 28.

Jose Luis Chilavert, named top goalkeeper in the world in a recent poll, made a welcome return to the Paraguayan team after three years, following a feud with his FA.

Argentina were the better team in their 3-1 home victory over Bolivia, though mistakes by goalkeeper Antonio Barrero made it easier for them. The first two goals, by dangerous Ariel Ortega, came from rebounds when Barrero failed to hold the ball, and he was slow to react as Batistuta scored the third.

This was Batistuta's 34th goal in 49 internationals since June 1991, equalling Argentina's record held by Diego Maradona.

Bolivia, lining up the basis of the team from the 1994 World Cup, but missing leading scorer William Ramallo and Milton Melgar (who currently have no club and are not playing), complained that the conditions – wind and rain – were not what they were used to.

Argentina coach Daniel Pasarella still insists he does not want to play Bolivia in La Paz, 3,580 metres above sea level – nor Ecuador, Argentina's next rival, in Quito, which stands at 2,800m. The latter has been scheduled to take place in the midday heat.

Pasarella got angry with Argentine FA chief Julio Grondona when he promised the Bolivians he would support them in their bid to play home games in La Paz when FIFA voted on it.

The issue is increasingly being seen as a political move backed by Brazil, who suffered one of their few defeats during qualifying for the last World Cup in La Paz.

There are medical arguments against visiting teams playing at this altitude – which also work the other way when teams from high countries play at sea level – but playing in high temperatures at midday, as has been done in recent World Cups (under FIFA orders), is far worse for the health.

Four nations, plus Brazil, will qualify for the World Cup's final stages in France.

ERIC WEIL

Argentina

SOUTH AMERICAN keepers are making a habit of scoring goals. Recently, it was the turn of Estudiantes de La Plata's Carlos Bossio, who headed in from a corner two minutes from time, when his team were losing 1-0 to Racing Club.

This was the first time in Argentine pro soccer that a goal had been scored in open play by a goalkeeper.

The national championship's closing tournament has three small clubs in the top three places with nine games to go – Lanus, Gimnasia y Esgrima de La Plata and Estudiantes de La Plata. But Velez Sarsfield – fourth, four points from the top – are still looked upon as likely winners in coach Carlos Bianchi's last season with the club. He is expected to move to Europe.

Boca Juniors almost fell out of contention while Diego Maradona was injured, picking up just one point out of 12. They lost 6-0 at home to La Plata's Gimnasia on the day they inaugurated their refurbished stadium.

ERIC WEIL

Brazil Gremio play way to the top . . .

THERE is still a long way to go before you could describe South American champions Gremio as likeable, but the vicious thuggery which marred (and contributed significantly to) their Libertadores triumph last year is now being replaced by some proper football.

Luis Felipe Scolari, a ruthless defender in his playing days, is still in charge, and the team's base is much the same, but Gremio this year are an altogether more mellow outfit, concentrating on the white, round thing better than last year, when they seemed to view it as incidental.

They have played their way to the semi-finals of the Copa Brasil and appeared to be heading for a second successive Libertadores final.

Having sat out the first-round Libertadores marathon as holders, Gremio comfortably despatched Brazilian champions Botafogo 3-1 on aggregate in the second round, and then totally outclassed Corinthians in the first leg of their quarter-final.

Gremio produced the perfect performance for this type of competition and won 3-0 away. Apart from a hectic ten-minute spell in the first half, Gremio's superbly organised defence rarely showed signs of cracking, and at the other end, they destroyed Corinthians with the trickery of Paulo Nunes and Jardel's aerial power.

Jardel, top scorer in the Libertadores last year, scored two of the goals, both far-post headers.

Memories of last year were briefly revived when captain Dinho, sent off three times in 1995, saw red again after two typically cynical fouls, but you can't have everything.

The real violence has come from two players who claim to be "Athletes of Christ". Former World Cup goalkeeper Taffarel committed an astonishing assault in a match in the Minas Gerais championship, between Atletico Mineiro and Caldense. Taffarel went rushing out of his area when Caldense forward Jaerson was through on goal, brought him to the ground with a crunching late tackle, and then kicked him as he lay on the pitch. Taffarel was sent off and later apologised. Apparently, tempers are generally short at Atletico because of salaries not being paid on time.

A tackle by Marcelinho Carioca of Corinthians on Junior of Palmeiras was even worse. Marcelinho, another committed Christian, threw himself feet first at Junior's left leg and amazingly got away with only a yellow card. Equally amazingly, Junior survived intact.

Even the Sao Paulo Federation, who usually turn a blind eye to violence, were moved to act, suspending referee Marcio Resende de Freitas for failing to take proper action.

Mexico

Celaya miss unique chance

IN spite of all hopes, the dream of the Cinderella team Atletico Celaya being promoted and winning the League in the same year vanished after a 0-0 draw with defending champions Necaxa in the second leg of the play-off final.

The first leg was drawn 1-1, with the return at the Azteca Stadium. Necaxa played defensively and Celaya missed at least three scoring opportunities. Eventually, Necaxa's away goal (a header by Ricardo Pelaez) proved to be the deciding factor.

This (as every year) prompted calls for changes in the rules. Many critics think the champion should be the team with the most points; or at least if there is to be a play-off system the top team should get a bye into the final while the other well-placed teams play each other to determine their opponents.

Team owners have accepted that each team can have four foreign players in the three tournaments programmed for 1996-97.

The first will be the Copa Mexico, starting June 30. Then, copying the complicated Argentinian system, we will have two different tournaments, named Summer and Winter. Each team will play 17 matches in both leagues, and then two champions will be decided by play-offs. They seem to forget that Mexico have to play matches to qualify for the World Cup.

● Cruz Azul's Carlos Hermosillo is Mexico's top scorer for the third season in a row – with 26 goals.

CARLOS F RAMIREZ

United States

Bad news is good news

The bad news is that the average Major League Soccer crowd which, after one week of operation, stood at 33,000 has gone down to 24,000. The good news is that this bad news is really good news.

The new figure is a more realistic one, not boosted by those opening-day crowds. And it is still twice the 12,000 figure that MLS said it would consider 'successful' in its inaugural season.

Another good-looking MLS statistic is the goals-scored column: a healthy 3.3 per game. Despite these statistical successes, there is a detectable unease in MLS circles.

Success does bring problems, and this is what has the MLS people frowning: the fans have turned out . . . but is the quality of MLS games good enough to keep them coming back?

The answer for Tampa Bay Mutiny and Los Angeles Galaxy must be yes. These are the most consistent teams in the league. Elsewhere, there are question marks, particularly for New York/New Jersey MetroStars.

It is an unwritten rule of American sport that if you want a successful pro league, it has to include a flourishing New York team. MetroStars, sad to say, are moribund, languishing at the bottom of the Eastern Division with only one 'real' win in seven games (they also have two shootout wins).

Yes, the fans have been coming – there were 14,000 in Giants Stadium on a bitterly cold, damp evening to watch MetroStars play the second-worst team in the League, Colorado Rapids – but the MetroStars are a sorry apology for a team.

Now, with Arrigo Sacchi calling Roberto Donadoni up for Euro 96 duty with Italy, they have lost their main star. Eddie Firmani wears the harassed look of a coach who is about to get the dreaded "full confidence" vote from his general manager, Charlie Stillitano.

Many of MetroStars' woes must be laid firmly at Firmani's feet. His 16 choices in the player draft were widely ridiculed. The respected weekly *Soccer America* rated the MetroStars' choices the worst of all 10 clubs.

Firmani also chose four young players who are members of the US Olympic team. His constant complaint is that those players are always flying off to play with the Olympic team – a situation that will get worse as the Olympic Games approach. Yet this situation was not apparently foreseen by Firmani.

Tampa did things differently. They put their three Olympic players on their inactive roster and paid them only minimum wages. That left money in the salary budget to sign three good players for its active roster.

The MetroStars, however, have no money left to bring in quality replacements. For one game, they had to borrow two players from the local semi-pro team, the Long Island Rough Riders.

Nor has Firmani endeared himself to the local Hispanic media, which has accused him of being anti-Hispanic. His dropping of Colombian Jorge Acosta is difficult to explain and his attitude to Venezuelan Giovanni Savarese has not gone down too well.

Firmani then claimed that the League should compensate the MetroStars for the prolonged absence of Donadoni. Another star player is needed, he said, evidently expecting the League to come up with the money to pay him.

Who might you be thinking of, asked a journalist – Roberto Baggio, say? "No," said Firmani, taking the suggestion seriously, "I wouldn't want Baggio in my team." His days as the MetroStars coach must surely be numbered.

PAUL GARDNER

CONCACAF

UAG take the Cup

UAG of Mexico defeated El Salvador's Luis Angel Firpo in the final of the CONCACAF Cup-winners Cup in Santa Ana, California.

Agustin Garcia's late winner against Firpo made UAG the third Mexican club in a row to win this competition.

Honduras

First-phase winners Olimpia could have avoided a two-match final but were eliminated from the play-offs by Real Espana. They now wait for the winner to be decided between defending champions Victoria, Motagua and Real Espana to know their championship opponents.

Motagua need only a draw in their last match to make the final.

Costa Rica

Alajuela captured the first-phase championship by eight points, but even after 44 matches they have not earned the overall title. Now they enter the second phase with seven other teams – Herediano, Saprissa, Cartagines, Belen, Puntarenas, San Carlos and Ramonense.

Guatemala

Xelaju have grabbed top spot in the Octagonal Group with a 2-0 win over Comunicaciones, the first phase champions. But Xelaju are still not assured a place in the final against Comunicaciones.

Municipal's Juan Carlos Plata scored all three of Guatemala's goals in their two World Cup qualifying wins over Nicaragua.

El Salvador

Defending champions FAS and Luis Angel Firpo will battle for the title for the second consecutive year.

FAS laboured past Municipal Limeno, 3-2 on aggregate, while Firpo also won 3-2, against Aguila.

SCOTT GLEBA

just for a change

Marcelinho went on to score a late goal with one of his characteristic free-kicks to earn Corinthians a 2-2 draw that ended a run of 29 straight wins for Palmeiras – 22 in the Sao Paulo championships, three friendlies and four in the Copa Brasil.

Palmeiras then lost their next game, 1-0 to Guarani, but won their next three and were poised to win the tournament, having also won the first stage. They were six points clear of Santos and Sao Paulo with three games to go. If they win the second stage, they take the title automatically, which means the lucrative four-team play-off will not take place.

ROMARIO is making news in the Rio de Janeiro championship, in which the winners of the first and second stages and teams with the most points over the two combined go into the finals.

Flamengo finished top of the first part, thanks largely to 17 goals in 11 games from a revitalised Romario.

He soon will be joined in attack by Bebeto from Deportivo La Coruna in a formation that will bring back memories of 1994 – an amazing signing, given that Flamengo are reportedly £13million in debt.

BRIAN HOMEWOOD

Back on form . . . Romario

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Japan

Laudrup signs for Kobe

MICHAEL LAUDRUP, of Denmark and Real Madrid, has stunned quite a few big clubs by signing for Vissel Kobe of Japan's Second Division.

He is due to arrive on a 16-month contract directly after the European Championships and should make his debut on August 18, at home to Pierre Littbarski's outfit, Brunnel Sendai.

Vissel are managed by Stuart Baxter, who says: "I have sent Michael some videos of our games, and he says what we all say – some things look quite good, others pretty amateur.

"I can promise him that we are well-organised, and we also have the people of Kobe, who have suffered for a while and really want a J.League team.

"Also, we have good international schools for his children, and he and I have Norwegian wives."

By all reports, it was a phone call between the wives that fixed the deal.

THERE is no keeping Verdy Kawasaki out of the news, despite an unimpressive start to the new season.

First, there were the on-off negotiations with Donizete and Bebeto, neither of whom seemed to want to go to Japan.

Donizete finally said yes, having hung out for a much bigger offer, and scored freely in the pre-season friendlies, but he looked unhappy after that. Reports from Brazil suggest that Tulio is finding it hard to score without Donizete. In Japan, it looks as if Donizete cannot do much without Tulio, either.

Then, after a 3-2 home loss to Gamba Osaka, Brazilian manager Nelsinho quit Verdy, saying that he had done all he could and that the stress was too much. They quickly replaced him with Emerson Leao, the Brazilian World Cup keeper and former manager of Shimizu S-Pulse, who had long ago said his dream was to manage Verdy.

Those changes first fuelled speculation that Donizete would leave, and then cost Verdy their most popular player - Ruy Ramos, who had been with the club for 19 years, but openly dislikes Leao. Ramos went to bottom club Kyoto Purple Sanga even before Leao arrived, in order to avoid a confrontation.

When Leao arrived, it was not Donizete but Bismarck who was in trouble. Bismarck suffered the embarrassment of being substituted for the first time ever in the J.League, and seeing Verdy improve as a result.

They scored eight in Leao's first two games in charge – though they also conceded seven.

Nelsinho's reputation was so high that even last year's disastrous start and the failure to win a third consecutive title did nothing to harm his position. This year, however, everything was different.

"If I adjust problems in one zone, then new problems appear somewhere else," he said.

The choice of Leao to succeed him was remarkable. His tight teamwork and reputation for discipline could hardly be more different from the flamboyant Verdy style. Verdy's days of pop-star individualism may be over.

KYOTO Purple Sanga set an unenviable record with their 10th consecutive J.League defeat, 3-0 at home to fellow new-boys Avispa Fukuoka. "We didn't lose to Avispa," said coach Oscar. "We lost to ourselves."

Heading East . . . Michael Laudrup

JAPAN debated long and hard, then decided to stay with Under-23 players at the Olympics this summer. Anything else, though, would be unfair to the youngsters who had qualified. But some over-age players may be used if the kids are sick or injured.

YOJI TOTSUKA, president of Shimizu S-Pulse, has resigned. The club's accumulated debt is now over £6.6million.

MIKE PLASTOW & MICHI ISHIJIMA

India

League starts at last

PLANS to reorganise soccer in India are taking shape, with the foundation of a National League.

A semi-professional Premier Division is due to start in December and continue to March. A First Division will follow in due course.

The creation of the new League follows a visit by a FIFA study group last year, when members visited six major centres and put forward proposals to raise interest in the game.

The following clubs will play in the new Premier Division:

East Bengal, Mohun Bagan and Mohammedan Sporting Club (Calcutta); Churchill Brothers, Salgascar SC and Dempo SC (Goa); Air India and Mahindra & Mahindra (Bombay); Jagajith Cotton Textile Mills (Phagwara); Kerala Police (Thiruvananthapuram); Indian Telephone Industries (Bangalore); and Indian Bank (Madras).

Travel between the centres will be the major problem facing the clubs, in a huge country of 900 million people.

• Kerala Police beat the All-India Revenue Cup holders, Punjab Police, 1-0 in the final of the 16-club event, staged in Ernakulam, Cochin. This was a repeat of the All-India Police Games final held two months earlier.

BHASI MALAPARAMB

IN BRIEF

IRAQ

AL ZAWRA recorded their second League and Cup double in a row, after beating Police side Al Shourta 2-1 in the Cup Final.

JORDAN

AL FAYSALI defeated Al Wahadat 1-0 to win the Super Cup for the 10th time. The fixture marked the start of the 1996 season.

KUWAIT

THE LEAGUE TITLE will be decided in the last round, between Kazma and Salmiya. The former lead by two points with one game to go.

SAUDI ARABIA

AL ITTIHAD, Al Ahly, Al Nasr and Al Hilal were the first four in the table and qualified for the semi-final play-off. Al Hilal's Dutch manager, Wim Van Hanegem, was sacked as a result of a preliminary-round exit in the Crown Prince Cup.

OMAN

SOUR retained the title with two rounds to go, after their 1-0 win over Al Ahly. They now have 56 points, with Oman SC eight points behind. The national team suffered yet another setback, a 3-1 defeat by Jordan in Amman.

SYRIA

INTERNATIONAL forward Jamal Kazem of Syrian club Hottin has been banned for life from football activity, at club and national level, after a game between Hottin (second) and Karama (leaders), in Banias.

MOHAMED CHBARO

BANGLADESH

FOOTBALL in Bangladesh is in a shambles. Halfway through the planned domestic season, the ball has not yet rolled.

An enraged Players' Welfare Association came forward to fill the void with their own tournament, involving Mohammedan, Abahani and Muktijoddah.

Meanwhile the FA continues without a president, after 20 months. Political and sectional turmoil are the causes of the delay.

KOREA

NEWLY-PROMOTED Blue Wings (Samsung), with six players from the Korean Olympic team, started the season with a 2-1 win at home against holders Hyundai in the curtain-riser adidas Cup.

After the fourth round-robin series Posco Atoms were top on eight points.

MALAYSIA

WITHOUT two foreign scorers, Igor Shkvyrin and Gus Cerror, champions Pahang are hovering in the middle of the Premier League table.

QATAR

AL ARABI, helped by Nigerian forward Ricky Owubokiri, won the Qatar title with 36 points from 16 matches.

SINGAPORE

THE GOLDEN BOY of Singapore football, Fandi Ahmed, is playing in the new S-League, as captain of Geylang United. Geylang's Iranian recruit, Hamid Reza, scored two opportunist goals to beat Tiong Bahru United in their opening encounter.

THAILAND

TELEPHONE Organisation of Thailand (Tot) are leading the table with six wins in six matches. After the current home and away matches the top four will enter a play-off.

UAE

THE 11TH ASIAN CUP finals hosts, UAE, started their preparation with a spirited performance, winning the four-nation Emirate International Tournament against Morocco, South Korea and Egypt.

AZAM MAHMOOD

Black day for Ivory trio

Mark Gleeson reports on some surprise results in Africa's club competitions

IVORY COAST, still upset after the dismal performance of their national team in the African Nations Cup, took a further blow when all three of their teams were knocked out of African club competition.

The biggest surprise for the Ivorians came in nearby Senegal, where highly-fancied ASEC Abidjan were knocked out of the Champions Cup by Diaraf Dakar on the away goals rule.

ASEC were beaten finalists in last year's Champions Cup and among the favourites for this year's competition.

In the Cup-winners Cup, Stade Abidjan were beaten 2-0 in Morocco by FUS Rabat and went out 3-1 on aggregate. The Moroccans are coached by former ASEC and Ivorian national team coach Philippe Troussier.

SO Armee were the other Ivorian casualty, beaten by CAF holders Etoile du Sahel in Tunisia. Etoile quickly overcame the Army club's precarious 2-1 lead from the first leg and went on to win 3-1, giving a 4-3 aggregate.

South Africa's Mamelodi Sundowns were knocked out by Stade Tamponnaise on the French-controlled island of Reunion, in the same tournament. A goalless draw gave Stade a 2-1 aggregate win.

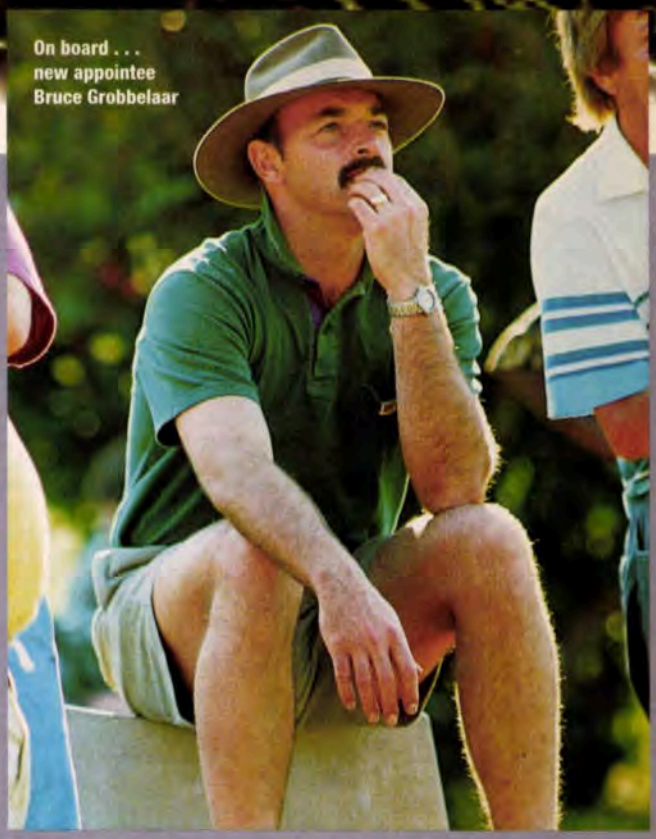
Nigeria's Rangers International were victims of unfancied opposition, too, beaten 1-0 at home by Unisport Bafang of neighbouring Cameroon to go out of the Cup-winners Cup 2-1 on aggregate.

ASEC Abidjan were among the favourites for this year's Champions Cup

A last-minute goal from Ziad Assad spared Algeria's JS Kabylie the ignominy of defeat against unheralded Fantastique in Bujumbura, Burundi. The 20,000 crowd packing Prince Louis stadium watched the Algerians sneak home with the only goal of the tie.

Angola's Petro Atletico also scraped past opposition from East Africa, beating the Patriotic Army team of Rwanda 3-0 in Luanda for a 3-2 aggregate victory.

Morocco are the only country with a team in the quarter-finals of all three competitions, to be played in September. As well as FUS Rabat's progress in the Cup-winners Cup, COD Meknes won their Champions Cup tie against Goldfields of Ghana and Kawkab Marrkesh went through in the CAF Cup against Patronage Saint-Anne of Congo.



On board . . . new appointee Bruce Grobbelaar

Bruce turns to coaching

Zimbabwe appoint Grobbelaar

BRUCE GROBBELAAR, who faces corruption charges in English soccer's biggest match-fixing scandal in 30 years, has been appointed deputy national soccer coach in Zimbabwe.

Grobbelaar, now 38, agreed to take on the position after a lengthy discussion with Leo Mugabe, chairman of the Zimbabwe FA and nephew of President Robert Mugabe, and will go to Madagascar with the national team for their next international match in June.

Zimbabwe's new coach, Marc Duvillard of Switzerland, recently dropped Grobbelaar as the national side's goalkeeper, after he had starred for many years. Grobbelaar has been given a free transfer after two seasons with Southampton. Before going there, he had spent over a decade at Liverpool, playing more than 600 games and earning 13 major medals.

He was a regular – and the only white player – in Zimbabwe's national team, and became a symbol of racial cooperation in a country that was bitterly divided by civil war in 1980.

Grobbelaar has retained the fierce loyalty of his black fans throughout the match-fixing controversy. He former Aston Villa striker John Fashanu and Wimbledon goalkeeper Hans Segers and Malaysian businessman Heng Lim have been charged with conspiring to influence the outcome of games. The charges carry a maximum penalty of seven years in jail.

The accusations are the biggest game-fixing scandal in English soccer since 1965, when ten players were jailed for accepting money to rig results. They also were suspended for life, although these bans were later lifted.

MARK GLEESON

IN BRIEF

West Africa

IVORY COAST striker Sekou Bamba is being investigated by the government and football federation for allegedly falsifying signatures on his transfer documents and international clearances to move from ASEC Abidjan to El Ittihad of Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, ASEC have a 100 per cent record in pool B of the championship after 11 matches, and Africa Sports have a clear lead in group A.

Goldfields won a third successive title in Senegal, while Sharks FC are the leaders of the new Nigerian professional league.

Central Africa

MUNTUNIBE SANTOS has returned to his post as national coach of Zaire after being suspended 16 months ago for fielding over-age players in the Under-23 team.

Former Zairian international Santos has taken charge of Zaire's national team for the second time. In his first match back, the Leopards lost 2-1 to Congo in a friendly, but won a return friendly 3-1.

Malawi have re-appointed Rueben Malola as national team coach. Malawi were beaten 1-0 by Zambia in a friendly in Blantyre and drew 1-1 in Lilongwe the following day.

East Africa

UNHERALDED Shinyanga lead the Tanzanian First Division but could be caught by Young Africans and defending champions Simba.

In Kenya, Kisumu Posta lead the newly introduced Premier League but the focus is on champions Gor Mahia, who have slumped to second from bottom.

Posta lead Uganda's Super Division by seven points over SCOUL.

North Africa

TUNISIAN defender Hedi Benrekhissa has been named as Arab Footballer of the Year. The Esperance player will be on view at the Olympic Games.

In Algeria, Mouloudia Oran have a handy lead at the top.

Southern Africa

DEFENDING champions Mufulira Wanderers are the early leaders in Zambia, while CAPS United lead the Zimbabwean Premier Division.

MARK GLEESON

Diary APRIL/MAY 1996

APRIL							
Week	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
14	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
16	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
17	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
18	29	30					

OBITUARIES

ADEMIR DE MENEZES, one of Brazil's greatest players and centre-forward of the luckless 1950 World Cup team, has died of cancer in Rio de Janeiro aged 74. Ademir scored 35 goals in 41 internationals, placing him fourth on Brazil's all-time top scorers' list behind Pele, Zico and Tostao.
PETER SWALES, former Manchester City chairman, has died aged 63 in hospital after a heart attack. Swales was chairman of City for more than 20 years from 1973.

MONDAY ..... 22 APRIL

FRANCE: Brazilian forward Rai signs a new three-year contract with Paris Saint-Germain.
HOLLAND: Ajax defender Michael Reiziger pulls out of the Dutch squad for the friendly against Germany with an ankle injury.
ITALY: Juventus striker Gianluca Vialli, whose contract expires at the season's end, says sentiment will matter more than money when he decides which of a string of offers to accept.
SWITZERLAND: Spaniard Manuel Diaz Vega is appointed as referee for the Champions League Cup Final between Ajax and Juventus.

TUESDAY ..... 23 APRIL

ACTION: Chile beat Australia 3-0 in a friendly international with two goals from Ivan Zamorano.
ITALY: George Weah extends his contract with Milan until 1999.
SWITZERLAND: UEFA fine Real Madrid £50,000 for hooligan violence during the Champions League Cup quarter-final second leg against Juventus; Juventus are fined a total of £27,000 for fan fireworks and a pitch invasion by eight supporters after their semi-final first leg match with Nantes.

WEDNESDAY ..... 24 APRIL

ACTION: No fewer than 19 senior internationals take place in Europe and South America, including seven World Cup-ties. In the European ties, Greece beat Slovenia 2-0, Yugoslavia mark their return to competition by defeating the Faroe Islands 3-1 and Macedonia struggle to beat Liechtenstein 3-0. The South American World Cup schedule opens with victories for Argentina (3-1 v Bolivia), Colombia (1-0 v Paraguay), Ecuador (4-1 v Peru) and Uruguay (2-0 away to Venezuela) . . . in warm-up friendlies for Euro 96, Holland lose 1-0 at home to Germany in a match marred by hooligan trouble and 50 arrests, while England draw 0-0 at home to fancied Croatia.
ENGLAND: Tottenham cut the valuation of their own players by a third in the wake of the Bosman ruling over transfers.
ITALY: Roma president Franco Sensi says he is discussing a deal for next season with Argentinian coach Carlos Bianchi, of Velez Sarsfield.
PORTUGAL: Sporting Lisbon beat Porto 1-0 in a thrilling cup semi-final replay to earn a place against Benfica in an all-Lisbon final. A knee ligament injury suffered by defender Jorge Costa which will keep him out of Euro 96.
SWITZERLAND: UEFA bans goalkeeper Alvydas Koncevicius of Lithuania's Zalgiris Vilnius for three years from all European competitions for throwing a bottle at the referee during a friendly against Norwegian side Tromso on March 9 . . . UEFA prepares to meet the European Commission to discuss the aftermath of the Bosman ruling . . . Brazil still top the world rankings.
TURKEY: Galatasaray win the cup 2-1 on aggregate after drawing 1-1 away to Fenerbahce after extra time in the second leg of the final.

THURSDAY ..... 25 APRIL

ENGLAND: Euro 96 security officials say it is planned to bar from the event hooligans involved in violence at Wednesday night's international in Rotterdam between Holland and Germany . . . England coach Terry Venables warns injured defenders Tony Adams, Steve Howey and Gareth Southgate that they must prove their fitness to be considered for Euro 96.
FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain coach Luis Fernandez makes a shock announcement that he will quit at the season's end.
GERMANY: Jurgen Klinsmann appears to aim oblique criticism at Bayern Munich coach Otto Rehhagel by saying: "The number of goals we have scored in dead ball situations is alarmingly low. We are without ideas and are not creative."
ITALY: Mario Pescante, president of the Italian Olympic committee, says he wants Italy to break ranks with the rest of Europe and include the three permitted over-age players in their team at the Olympic Games finals . . . England midfielder Paul Ince appears poised to stay with Inter Milan.
PORTUGAL: Jean-Marc Bosman trains with Benfica ahead of an all-star match on May 14 to raise cash to help pay his legal fees.
SPAIN: Atletico Madrid president Jesus Gil is suspended for 10 months from exercising office by the Spanish federation as punishment for striking the general manager of Compostela . . . Real Madrid thrash outgoing Belgian champions Anderlecht 8-3 in a friendly in Alicante.

FRIDAY ..... 26 APRIL

BELGIUM: European commissioner Karel Van Miert, after a meeting with UEFA general secretary Gerd Aigner, casts doubt on the legality of UEFA's latest attempt to get round the Bosman ruling.
BRAZIL: Sportswear giant Nike confirms reports that it is negotiating a deal with the Brazilian national team.
COLOMBIA: Quindio midfielder Victor Mafla is suspended for 40 matches for punching a referee.
ENGLAND: Colin Hendry signs a new contract to keep him with Blackburn until 2001.
FRANCE: Luis Fernandez says his decision to quit PSG was because his wife had become worried about his health under management stress.
GERMANY: Confusion reigns over reports that Helmut Haller is to hand over to Geoff Hurst the original ball from the 1966 World Cup Final . . . Martin Driller scores the fastest goal of the season after 33 seconds as St Pauli beat Schalke 2-0.
ITALY: Juventus say they will make available to their fan clubs their quota of about 20,000 tickets for the Champions League Cup Final against Ajax. Capacity for the Final is restricted for security and other reasons to 60,000 . . . president Massimo Moratti says Inter are negotiating with Real Madrid's Chilean striker Ivan Zamorano and Bayern Munich's Swiss midfielder Ciriaco Sforza.
SPAIN: Real Madrid's Denmark captain Michael Laudrup says he will join Japanese second division club Vissel Kobe on August 1.

SATURDAY ..... 27 APRIL

ACTION: Auxerre are left on the brink of French title success after Paris Saint-Germain lose 1-0 at home to Lille . . . Borussia Dortmund, despite being held 1-1 at home by Hamburg, edge ahead in the German title race after Bayern Munich lose 1-0 at home to Hansa Rostock . . . Spanish leaders Atletico Madrid slip up yet again, this time losing 3-2 at home to third-placed Valencia.
GERMANY: Bayern Munich sack trainer Otto Rehhagel after losing 1-0 at home to Hansa Rostock. President Franz Beckenbauer takes over as caretaker coach and announces that Italian Giovanni Trapattoni will take charge again for next season . . . Bayer Leverkusen sack Erich Ribbeck.
ITALY: Milan say the door is still open for coach Fabio Capello to stay.
GERMANY: The DFB says it will abolish domestic transfer fees for out-of-contract German players in the wake of the Bosman ruling and decides to allow clubs an unlimited number of European Union players but insists on the maintenance of a minimum of 12 German players in a squad.

SUNDAY ..... 28 APRIL

ACTION: Romario scores all four goals in Flamengo's 4-1 win over America in the first stage of Brazil's Rio championship . . . English leaders Manchester United go six points clear at the top after a 5-0 thrashing of Nottingham Forest at Old Trafford . . . Ajax clinch the Dutch title for the third year in a row by defeating Willem II 5-1 . . . Milan win their fourth Italian title in five years when they beat Fiorentina 3-1.
FRANCE: A dozen fans are taken to hospital in Bordeaux after a stampede for tickets for the UEFA Cup Final against Bayern Munich . . . Bordeaux midfielder Zinedine Zidane is voted French players' footballer of the year.
PORTUGAL: Porto goalkeeper Vitor Baia is reported poised to transfer to Barcelona.
SCOTLAND: Paul Gascoigne scores a hat-trick in the 3-1 win over Aberdeen with which Rangers secure an eighth consecutive league title.

MONDAY ..... 29 APRIL

BELGIUM: The European Union dismisses as "a waste of time" proposals from both UEFA and the German federation aimed at finding a compromise over the Bosman ruling on foreign players.
FRANCE: Monaco president Jean-Louis Campora says both Juventus and Parma are still interested in signing international defender Lilian Thuram.
GERMANY: Mikkel Beck, Danish striker of second division Fortuna Koln, is reported close to a transfer to Middlesbrough.
HOLLAND: An Ajax spokesman confirms that Patrick Kluivert, despite recent knee surgery, is ready to stand trial on a charge relating to a fatal traffic accident.
ITALY: The players' union postpones its next Serie A strike until May 12, the last Sunday of the season.
SCOTLAND: Rangers are reported to be negotiating to sign Jurgen Klinsmann in the summer as well as Gianluca Vialli . . . the SFA rejects an offer of 2,000 extra tickets for Scotland games in the European Championship finals in England because they do not include the match against England.

TUESDAY ..... 30 APRIL

ENGLAND: Newcastle's Colombian forward Faustino Asprilla is, surprisingly, banned for only one game for elbowing and head-butting Manchester City's Keith Curle . . . Leeds clear Tomas Brolin to return early to Sweden to undergo surgery on his ankle . . . police investigating a potential Euro 96 ticket scam make 13 arrests in London . . . overnight newspaper reports claim that the FA has offered the England manager's job to Glenn Hoddle.
ITALY: Milan veteran Roberto Donadoni postpones his transfer to New York at the request of national coach Arrigo Sacchi – suggesting he will be named in Italy's squad for Euro 96 . . . Milan present Dutch defenders Michael Reiziger and Edgar Davids from Ajax as new, free, signings for next season . . . Milan coach Fabio Capello says he still intends to take over Real Madrid next season . . . Verona agree the signing of Dutch defender Michel Ferrier from Volendam despite a racist protest by hooligan fans . . . the federation ignores UEFA policy and select three over-age players, after all, for the Atlanta Olympic Games.
RUSSIA: A UEFA delegation visits Vladikavkaz to study whether it will be safe to stage Champions League matches there next season.
SPAIN: Brazil striker Bebeto says agreement has been reached for his transfer from Deportivo Coruna to Flamengo of Rio de Janeiro.
UNITED STATES: Mauricio Cienfuegos of Los Angeles Galaxy is named first Major League Soccer Player of the Month.

Award-winner . . . Bordeaux's Zinedine Zidane

WEDNESDAY ..... 1 MAY

ACTION: Bayern Munich beat Bordeaux 2-0 in the first leg of the UEFA Cup Final . . . Poland and Belarus draw 1-1 in Mielec . . . Turkey beat Ukraine 3-2 in a Euro 96 warm-up match in Samsun.
ARGENTINA: Diego Maradona pays £200,000 for the executive box with the best view at Boca Juniors' Bombonera in an auction.
CZECH REPUBLIC: Slavia Prague secure their first league title in 49 years.
ENGLAND: Promoted Derby County are poised to bid for Denmark defender Jacob Laursen . . . Manchester United's Old Trafford is praised as the "best stadium in England" by UEFA inspections chief Ernie Walker . . . Georgi Kinkladze receives a 'state visit' at Manchester City's Maine Road from the Georgian Prime Minister, Nikoloz Lekishili.
HOLLAND: Ajax forward Patrick Kluivert goes on trial on a charge following a fatal car crash. The verdict will be delivered on May 14. The prosecutor requests a nine-month jail sentence.
ITALY: Lunch with Milan president Silvio Berlusconi and aide Adriano Galliani fails to change Fabio Capello's mind about moving to Real Madrid . . . Roberto Donadoni is expected to make his debut at the weekend, after all, for New York/New Jersey MetroStars in MLS but will be released to return and play for Italy at Euro 96.
SPAIN: Atletico Madrid goalkeeper Jose Francisco Molina denies speculation about a summer transfer to Barcelona . . . Barcelona agree a contract extension with Ivan de la Pena . . . Gheorghe Hagi's agent says the Barcelona midfielder may move to Japan this summer.

Diary MAY 1996

MAY							
Week	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
19				1	2	3	4
20	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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22	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
23	26	27	28	29	30	31	

Summer move . . . Gianluca Vialli

THURSDAY . . . . . 2 MAY

BRAZIL: Corinthians midfielder Bernardo says he considers he has been "born again" after the aircraft bringing the team home from a match in Ecuador crashed on take-off. No-one was hurt.
BULGARIA: Slavia Sofia are awarded the Bulgarian Cup because opponents Levski walked off the pitch 15 minutes from time in Wednesday night's final in protest at the refereeing.
ENGLAND: Glenn Hoddle is formally presented as new manager of England . . . Newcastle slip, crucially, in the championship race when they can only draw 1-1 with Nottingham Forest . . . Matthew Simmons, the man who provoked the Eric Cantona kung-fu kick controversy, is sentenced to seven days in jail after he kicked prosecuting lawyer Jeffrey McCann in court.
GERMANY: Borussia Monchengladbach's Martin Dahlin is banned for eight matches after elbowing Kaiserslautern defender Axel Roos.
ITALY: Fiorentina beat Atalanta 1-0 in the first leg of the Italian Cup final . . . Milan coach Fabio Capello says he expects to sign for Real Madrid within a week of the end of the season.
SCOTLAND: Rangers' Gordon Durie is recalled by Scotland for Euro 96.

FRIDAY . . . . . 3 MAY

BELGIUM: Jean-Marc Bosman says he intends to sue FIFA over obstacles put in the way of a fund-raising match to help meet his legal fees.
BULGARIA: Levski president Tomas Lafchis says that Bulgarian football is riddled with corruption.
PORTUGAL: The Portuguese federation decides to bring its own supplies of beef to England for Euro 96 because of concern over BSE . . . national coach Antonio Oliveira names an initial 30-strong squad for Euro 96.
SWITZERLAND: A FIFA spokesman says World Cup regulations would not permit a joint hosting by South Korea and Japan.
TURKEY: National manager Fatih Terim says he intends to resign after Euro 96.

SATURDAY . . . . . 4 MAY

ENGLAND: The FA reports that 194 countries will see Euro 96 on television.
FRANCE: Auxerre beat Nimes 2-1 to win the French Cup.
GERMANY: Darko Pancev says he will probably leave Fortuna Dusseldorf at the season's end to return to Red Star Belgrade.
HOLLAND: Ajax defender Frank de Boer is ruled out for two weeks after pulling a hamstring.
ITALY: Parma coach Nevio Scala confirms that he will quit at the season's end.
SWITZERLAND: The league clubs decide to expand foreigner restrictions next season to permit each team five imports on the pitch.

SUNDAY . . . . . 5 MAY

ACTION: Champions Necaxa hold onto their crown, drawing 0-0 at home with Celaya in the second leg of the Mexican play-off final, having drawn 1-1 in the first leg . . . Barcelona slip up badly in the Spanish title race, being held 1-1 at home by Sevilla . . . Grasshopper beat Servette 2-0 to secure the Swiss title for the second season running . . . Partizan Belgrade thrash Sloboda 5-1 to secure the Yugoslav league championship.

MONDAY . . . . . 6 MAY

ITALY: Arrigo Sacchi is reported to have asked Milan skipper Franco Baresi if he would consider a comeback for Euro 96 – and been turned down . . . Juventus threaten to play their league games in Bologna next season if the rent on the Delle Alpi stadium is not cut.

TUESDAY . . . . . 7 MAY

ENGLAND: Trevor Phillips quits suddenly as the Football Association's commercial director after a disagreement over "the FA's commercial policy and overall strategy" . . . Portuguese forward Dani's last game for West Ham before returning from loan to Sporting Clube of Portugal is a 4-1 defeat by Sporting, in a match to celebrate the London club's centenary.
GERMANY: Lothar Matthaus announces his retirement from the national team . . . Borussia Dortmund seize a potentially decisive advantage in the league title race – winning 2-0 against Leverkusen while Bayern Munich lose 3-2 away to Werder Bremen.
ITALY: The players union calls off its proposed strike for Sunday because the federation has agreed to many of its demands.
ROMANIA: Veterans of Steaua and Barcelona draw 1-1 in front of a 25,000 crowd in Bucharest in a rerun of the 1986 Champions Cup Final.
SPAIN: Betis claim that Real Madrid have lost their buy-back option on striker Alfonso after failing to pay a £1.2m fee by May 1 . . . Espanyol deny reports of an interest in Swedish forward Tomas Brolin.
SWITZERLAND: FIFA says that, to mark president Joao Havelange's 80th birthday, a special home in a Rio de Janeiro village for deprived children will be named after him.
TURKEY: A 12-year-old boy is reported by police to have committed suicide after Trabzonspor's 2-1 defeat on Sunday by Fenerbahce . . . Graeme Souness is dismissed as coach by Galatasaray who will replace him with national team boss Fatih Terim after Euro 96 . . . English coach Gordon Milne takes over at Bursaspor.

WEDNESDAY . . . . . 8 MAY

ACTION: Greece beat Georgia 2-1 in a friendly in Ioannina . . . Paris Saint-Germain become only the second French winners in Europe as they defeat Rapid Vienna 1-0 in the Cup-winners Cup Final in Brussels . . . Portugal (3-0 winners v Greece) and France (1-0 winners v Israel) reach the European under-16 final . . . Argentinian teams enjoy a scoring spree in the South American Club Cup, with San Lorenzo and River Plate both scoring five goals on their way to the quarter-finals. Defending champions Gremio of Brazil qualify at the expense of compatriots Botafogo.
ALBANIA: Tirana snatch the league title on the last day of the season at the expense of Teuta.
ENGLAND: Further chaos ensues over the Euro 96 tickets scandal in the wake of the resignation of the FA's commercial manager Trevor Phillips . . . Darren Anderton, Tony Adams and Alan Shearer are recalled after injuries to the England squad.
SPAIN: Colombia's Fredy Rincon confirms he will leave Real Madrid at the end of the season to join a club "where they talk less and play more" . . . Espanyol secure a UEFA Cup place by crushing Oviedo 5-0.
YUGOSLAVIA: Red Star beat Partizan 3-0 in the first leg of the cup final.
ZIMBABWE: Bruce Grobbelaar is dropped from the national squad "to give younger players a chance."

THURSDAY . . . . . 9 MAY

ACTION: Sweden beat Slovakia 2-1 in a World Cup qualifying warm-up.
ARGENTINA: Boca Juniors coach Carlos Bilardo names just one striker – Claudio Caniggia – away to Colon in the wake of a 6-0 record home defeat by Gimnasia y Esgrima La Plata.
ENGLAND: Attendance at Premier League games increased 13.5 per cent this season.
FRANCE: Speculation is raised that Luis Fernandez may stay on as PSG coach, after all.
ITALY: Lazio owner Sergio Cragnotti says the food group he owns, Cirio, will be Lazio's new sponsors, paying £4million over the next three years. . . Fiorentina are banned from their Florence stadium for one match because of hooligan trouble . . . Napoli prepare to appoint Gigi Simoni, from relegation-bound Cremonese, as coach for next season . . . Juventus agree a compromise deal over rent at the Delle Alpi.
SCOTLAND: Celtic captain Paul McStay is ruled out of Scotland's Euro 96 squad because of an ankle operation and is replaced by Coventry's Eoin Jess . . . Aberdeen line up Bulgarian midfielder Ilya Kiriakov from Cypriot team Anorthosis.
UNITED STATES: Mexico will open the 1996 US Cup, which also features the hosts and the Irish Republic, by taking on Bolivia in Dallas on June 8.

FRIDAY . . . . . 10 MAY

BRAZIL: Flamengo lose for the first time this year – going down 3-2 away to Internacional in a stormy Copa Brasil quarter-final first leg.
ENGLAND: Chelsea appoint Dutch midfielder Ruud Gullit as player-manager in succession to Glenn Hoddle . . . Trevor Phillips blames "spurious allegations" over the Euro 96 tickets fiasco for his resignation as the FA's commercial director.
FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Daniel Bravo says he will join Parma next season.
ITALY: Juventus' Gianluca Vialli, wanted by Chelsea and Rangers, is reported to be taking English lessons
NIGERIA: Dutchman Jo Bonfrere returns to his job as national coach of Nigeria a month after apparently quitting.
SPAIN: The federation decides that, after the Bosman ruling, teams will be permitted three non-EU players on the field next season, two the following year and only one from 1998-99.
UNITED STATES: Colorado Rapids sign veteran ex-England goalkeeper Chris Woods.

SATURDAY . . . . . 11 MAY

ACTION: Mexico beat El Salvador 3-0 and Costa Rica beat Trinidad and Tobago 4-2 in the CONCACAF Olympic qualifying tournament in Edmonton, Canada . . . in Austria, Rapid Vienna win 3-2 away to Vorwarts Steyr to go back to the top of the table . . . Manchester United create English football history when they beat Liverpool 1-0 in the FA Cup Final to become the first team to win the double twice . . . Auxerre secure both their first French league title and the double when they draw 1-1 at Guingamp . . . Borussia Dortmund win the German championship for the second successive season when they draw 2-2 at 1860 Munich while Bayern Munich lose 2-1 at Schalke . . . champions Maccabi Tel-Aviv secure their 17th Israeli league title . . . Lokomotiv Moscow beat Spartak Moscow 3-2 in the Russian Cup final . . . the Espanyol v Barcelona derby in Spain is suspended after nine minutes because of heavy rain.
ITALY: Gianluca Vialli says he is seriously thinking about a possible move to Rangers.

SUNDAY . . . . . 12 MAY

ACTION: Lebanon hit back from a goal down to beat Turkmenistan 3-1 in an Asian Cup qualifier . . . Milan, already crowned Italian champions for the fourth time in five seasons, end the season in style with a 7-1 thrashing of relegation-bound Cremonese . . . Atletico Madrid's win 2-1 over Salamanca to gain a four-point lead in Spain with two games remaining.
BELGIUM: Seven fans are charged and 100 arrested before, during and after Standard Liege's 1-0 home win over Antwerp.
SCOTLAND: Rangers' Paul Gascoigne is voted Footballer of the Year by the Scottish Football Writers Association.
SPAIN: Russian midfielder Igor Lediakhov is ruled out of Euro 96 with an injured left leg.

MONDAY . . . . . 13 MAY

DENMARK: John Jensen is ruled out of Euro 96 after damaging ligaments in his left knee.
ENGLAND: Liverpool's Rob Jones and Stan Collymore withdraw from Euro 96 contention with England because of injuries . . . Middlesbrough are poised to sign FC Porto's Brazilian midfielder Emerson.
FRANCE: Christophe Cocard, a key member of Auxerre's double-winning squad, agrees a summer move to Lyon . . . Strasbourg midfielder Franck Sauzee signs a three-year deal with Montpellier.
GERMANY: National coach Berti Vogts reveals that Mario Basler is to transfer from Werder Bremen to Bayern Munich after Euro 96.
ITALY: Arrigo Sacchi omits Roberto Baggio, Gianluca Vialli and Giuseppe Signori from his Euro 96 squad.
JAPAN: World Cup bid officials deny they have been asked by FIFA whether they would be willing to co-host the 2002 finals with South Korea.
POLAND: Antoni Piechniczek, 1982 World Cup finals boss, returns as national team coach.
SPAIN: National coach Javier Clemente relies on experience for his Euro 96 squad, leaving out Real Madrid's Raul and Barcelona's Ivan de la Pena.
TURKEY: Top players and coaches appealed to supporters to reduce the level of fanaticism which has led to serious woundings, killings and suicides.

Crossword

WIN AN EXCLUSIVE *WORLD SOCCER* SWEATSHIRT

The first five correct entries will each win a WORLD SOCCER sweatshirt. Send entries by JULY 1 to: WORLD SOCCER CROSSWORD (JULY), WORLD SOCCER, King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London SE1 9LS

JUNE SOLUTION

ACROSS: 7 Silva, 8 Rocha, 9 Arendse, 10 Aab, 11 Lupu, 13 Simo, 17 Agu, 18 Aloisio, 20 Deane, 21 Minsk.

DOWN: 1 Israel, 2 Ilie, 3 Hajdu, 4 Kreek, 5 Tchami, 6 Babb, 12 Paulao, 14 Onopko, 15 Haber, 16 Kozma, 17 Addo, 19 Sane.

JUNE WINNERS

Bryan Mitchell, Dundee, Scotland; Daniel Tunde, London; Sohrab Esteglali, London; Andrew Hudson, W. Yorkshire; Mohamed El Bark, Gloucester.

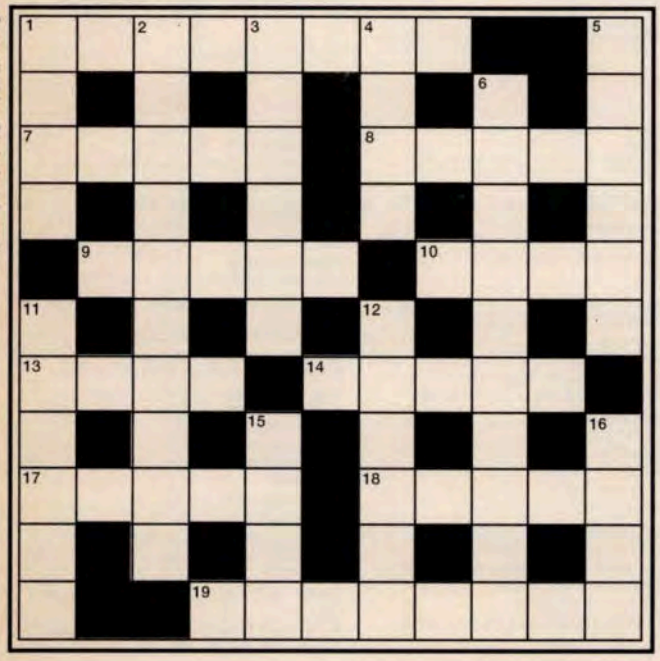
CLUES ACROSS

1 .....Swiss-born Lazio and Italy midfielder (2,6)
7 .....Napoli and Argentina defender formerly at River Plate (5)
8 .....French club from the Robert Diochon Stadium in Normandy (5)
9 .....Albacete coach who resigned his post in 1996 (5)
10 .....Portugal's ex-Sporting midfield man in Spain with Barcelona (4)
13 .....Winners of the first European Nations Championship in 1960 (1.1.1.1.)
14 .....One-time Kawasaki & Genoa forward transferred to Yomiuri Verdy in '95 (5)
17 .....City staging Euro 96 Group B matches with Newcastle (5)
18 .....Milan 'keeper formerly contracted to Cesena (5)
19 .....Spanish club whose stars include Manjarin and Donato Gama da Silva (2,6)

CLUES DOWN

1 .....Coach chosen to replace Argentina's Ricardo Rezza at Gijon (4)
2 .....Elland Road midfielder captaining Scotland (10)
3 .....Burkino Faso coach sacked during the '96 African Nations Cup finals (6)
4 .....National side defeated by Holland in the Euro 96 play-off at Anfield (4)
5 .....Paulinho ..... 25-year-old Porto and Portugal midfielder (6)
6 .....Romania's ex-Spurs forward now with West Ham (10)
11 .....Long-serving coach in charge at Metz (6)
12 .....Stalwart midfield star of Real Madrid and Spain (6)
15 .....Sofia club side of Bulgaria's Dimitar Popov (1.1.1.1.)
16 .....Marquinah's fellow Brazilian at Austria Salzburg (4)

Compiled by Christine Ansell



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JULY

FOR SALE

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requires a PC with at least 500K free base RAM /VGA/ 386 chip or better / HD

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NEW FEATURES INCLUDE:

game configuration (autosave - cancel friendlies - DISABLE SACKING - etc) ★ much improved youth players ★ real player ages ★ more goals in lower divisions ★ more realistic match animation ★ own goals ★ offside goals ★ 3 subs ★ history of last 500 players bought and sold ★ hugely improved scout *find a player* facility ★ all information saved from start to end of game - scores of seasons of information!

FEATURES INCLUDE:
- 176 teams: including non-league and European.
- each team has its own quirks: the better the team, the easier the game.
- domestic league of 4 divisions (English or Scottish). European super league
- league championships, 5 cup competitions, friendlies.
- fixtures, results, statistics for each team.
- trialists, youth players, transfer market.
- negotiate player and staff contract terms.
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- cash flow statement after every game.
- watch any game, and every move by each player, with text commentary; variable speed control; quick result option.
- bookings, sendings off, suspensions, substitutions, injuries, internationals.
- supports, crowd attendances, stadium capacities.
- player info includes skills (22 categories), confidence, hardness, fitness, energy, age, leadership, experience, goals, position (14 positions), best foot, salary, valuation, tactical instructions.
- team info includes skills (4 categories): formation; tactical instructionss; average fitness, hardness, confidence; staff and chairman details; support; stadium.
- set detailed tactics at both team and player level before and during each game.
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AUSTRIA

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, 21 APRIL

MIDWEEK

VORWARTS STEYR 1 (Berchthold 13)
STURM GRAZ 3 (Vastic 55, Haas 55, Prilasnig 75) Att: 2,000

AUSTRIA WIEN 0
ADMIRA WACKER 0 Att: 1,500

WEEKEND

ADMIRA WACKER 0
STURM GRAZ 2 (Wetl 53, Vastic 59) Att: 2,000

GRAZER AK 1 (Glieder 78)
FC TIROL 3 (Kirchler 22, Baur 68, Gruner 88) Att: 5,000

SV RIED 1 (Lesiak 3)
SALZBURG 1 (Winklhofer 67) Att: 8,000

VORWARTS STEYR 2 (Groble 25, 60)
AUSTRIA WIEN 2 (Pacult 8, Mjelde 70) Att: 1,500

RAPID WIEN 2 (Guggi 10, 75)
LINZER ASK 1 (Westerthaler 43) Att: 11,000

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, 28 APRIL

WEEKEND

STURM GRAZ 0
VORWARTS STEYR 0 Att: 5,000

FC TIROL 2 (Schiener 52, Kitzbichler 68)
ADMIRA WACKER 0 Att: 8,000

SALZBURG 4 (Hiden 40, Pffeifenberger 41, Heraf og 48, Stadler 70)
RAPID WIEN 2 (Jancker 16, Heraf 23) Att: 14,000

AUSTRIA WIEN 2 (Mjelde 45, 75)
SV RIED 0 Att: 2,500

LINZER ASK 1 (Westerthaler 27)
GRAZER AK 1 (Russ og 85) Att: 5,000

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 5

MIDWEEK

SALZBURG 3 (Pfeifenberger 8, 11, 38)
LINZER ASK 1 (Duspara 68) Att: 9,000

SV REID 1 (Dampfhofer 60)
VORWARTS 1 (Haberfellner 65) Att: 4,000

STURM GRAZ 0
GRAZER AK 2 (Penksa 5, Glieder 66) Att: 10,000

FC TIROL 1 (Janeschitz 9)
RAPID WIEN 1 (Barisic 90) Att: 17,00

WEEKEND

ADMIRA WACKER 0

LINZER ASK 1 (Westerthaler 66) Att: 600

AUSTRIA WIEN 2 (Mjelde 54,88)
SALZBURG 0 Att: 6,000

VORWARTS STEYR 0
FC TIROL 3 (Krinner 20, 40, 88) Att: 2,000

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 12

MIDWEEK

AUSTRIAN CUP - SEMI-FINALS

STURM GRAZ 3 GRAZER AK 1

ADMIRA WACKER 2 VORWARTS 0

WEEKEND

ADMIRA WACKER 1 (Klasz 72)
GRAZER AK 1 (Sabitzer 79) Att: 500

AUSTRIA WIEN 1 (Kellner 29)
FC TIROL 0 Att: 5,000

SV REID 1 (Eder 90)
LINZER ASK 0 Att: 6,000

STURM GRAZ 2 (Haas 44, Schopp 88)
SALZBURG 1 (Prosenik 22) Att: 7,000

VORWARTS STEYR 2 (Berchthold 52, 53)
RAPID WIEN 3 (Slivovski 50, 85, Ivanov 74) Att: 5,000

BELGIUM

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 21

WEEKEND

RWDM 0
CLUB BRUGGE 0 Att: 12,000

GENT 1 (Herreman pen 55)
HARELBEKE 0 Att: 5,000

CHARLEROI 4 (Misse-Misse 4, Casto 43, Silvagni 47, Balog 85)
ST TRUIDEN 0 Att: 4,000

EENDRACHT AALST 5 (Meyssen 2, Paass 21, 66, Carlos 82, Van Wambeke 83)
SERAING 0 Att: 4,500

LIERSE 0
MECHELEN 3 (Valgaeren 49, Czerniatynski 53, Minko 89) Att: 9,000

LOMMEL 0
ANTWERP 0 Att: 5,000

STANDARD 2 (Rednic 15, Wilmots 39)
BEVEREN 2 (Van Den Ede 32, Van Hoyweghen 78) Att: 12,000

CERCLE BRUGES 2 (Lauwers 42 52)
ANDERLECHT 1 (Suray 47) Att: 4,000

EKEREN 2 (Lukaku 30, Vande Walle pen 53)
WAREGEM 0 Att: 3,000

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 28

WEEKEND

BELGIAN CUP - SEMI-FINALS

ANTWERP 0
CERCLE BRUGES 3 (Cooreman 2, 26, Bwalya 77) Att: 7,000

CLUB BRUGGE 3 (Spehar 19, 86 pen, Claessens 30)
ST TRUIDEN 1 (Van Houdt 60) Att: 14,000

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 5

WEEKEND

ANDERLECHT 3 (Versavel 16, Babayaro 43, Bosman pen 87)
LIERSE 1 (Peeters 80) Att: 19,000

ANTWERP 2 (Verbeeck 47, Cestic 83)
GENT 1 (Katana 58) Att: 2,000

BEVEREN 1 (Goots 38)
CERCLE BRUGES 3 (Renty 58, Torma 63, Cooreman 90) Att: 4,500

CLUB BRUGGE 1 (Verheyen 32)
EENDRACHT AALST 3 (Meyssen pen 22, Paas 53, vanderhaegh 87) Att: 15,000

HARELBEKE 2 (Ngonge 65, Kubik 67)
STANDARD 3 (Wilmots 23, 77, Goossens 80) Att: 4,500

LOMMEL 2 (Janssen 86, Waligora 90)
WAREGEM 1 (Kubica 63) Att: 3,500

MECHELEN 1 (Vanaken 38)
RWDM 1 (Pierre 5) Att: 6,200

SERAING 2 (Lawaree 46, 81)
CHARLEROI 3 (Casto 15, Misse-Misse 65, 77) Att: 1,000

ST TRUIDEN 2 (Daelmans 54, Nielsen 77)
EKEREN 1 (Vande Walle pen 70) Att: 4,500

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 12

WEEKEND

GENT 2 (Martens 32, 49)
LOMMEL 0 Att: 2,000

CERCLE BRUGES 2 (Lauwers 43, Renty 50)
HARELBEKE 1 (De Tollenaere 55) Att: 2,700

CHARLEROI 1 (Remy 79)
CLUB BRUGGE 3 (Verheyen 19, 56, Stanic 75) Att: 8,000

EENDRACHT AALST 3 (Ebiede 51, Carlos 72, Van der Kelen 80)
MECHELEN 2 (Leen 5, M'Bonabucya 45) Att: 4,500

EKEREN 5 (Lukaku 15, Schaessens 16, Janssens 33, Hofmans 76, Kinet 80)
SERAING 0 Att: 4,500

LIERSE 3 (Rekdal 50, Peeter 57, Lehmann 78)
BEVEREN 1 (Haagdoren 13) Att: 6,000

RWDM 0
ANDERLECHT 0 Att: 12,000

STANDARD 1 (Schepens 89)
ANTWERP 0 Att: 8,000

WAREGEM 2 (Dewaele 40, Milinkovic 89)
ST TRUIDEN 1 (Petersen 9) Att: 1,200

ENGLAND

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 21

MIDWEEK

ARSENAL 0
TOTTENHAM 0 Att: 38,273

EVERTON 1 (Kanchelskis 18)
LIVERPOOL 1 (Fowler 87) Att: 40,120

NEWCASTLE 1 (Lee 11)
SOUTHAMPTON 0 Att: 36,554

NOTTM FOREST 0
COVENTRY 0 Att: 24,629

BLACKBURN 3 (Shearer 14, 46, Fenton 58)
WIMBLEDON 2 (Earle 23, Gayle 48) Att: 24,174

MAN UTD 1 (Keane 73)
LEEDS 0 Att: 48,382

ASTON VILLA 1 (McGrath 27)
WEST HAM 1 (Cottee 85) Att: 26,768

SHEFFIELD WED 0
CHELSEA 0 Att: 25,094

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 28

WEEKEND

ASTON VILLA 0
MAN CITY 1 (Lomas 70) Att: 39,336

BLACKBURN 1 (Gallacher 13)
ARSENAL 1 (Wright pen 75) Att: 29,834

BOLTON 0
SOUTHAMTPON 1 (Le Tissier 27) Att: 18,795

LIVERPOOL 1 (Collymore 70)
MIDDLESBROUGH 0 Att: 40,782

QPR 3 (Ready 59, Gallen 73, 78)
WEST HAM 0 Att: 18,828

SHEFFIELD WED 2 (Hirst 9, Degryse 64)
EVERTON 5 (Amokachi 4, Ebbrell 10, Kanchelskis 21, 54, 65) Att: 32,724

TOTTENHAM 1 (Armstrong 73)
CHELSEA 1 (Hughes 35) Att: 32,918

WIMBLEDON 0
COVENTRY 2 (Ndlovu 52, 88) Att: 15,540

MAN UTD 5 (Scholes 41, Beckham 44, 55, Giggs 70, Cantona 89)
NOTTM FOREST 0 Att: 53,926

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 5

MIDWEEK

LEEDS 0
NEWCASTLE 1 (Gillespie 17) Att: 38,862

ARSENAL 0
LIVERPOOL 0 Att: 38,323

LEEDS 1 (Wetherall 13)
TOTTENHAM 3 (Armstrong 18, Anderton 24, 66) Att: 30.061

NOTTM FOREST 1 (Woan 75)
NEWCASTLE 1 (Beardsley 33) Att: 28,280

WEEKEND

ARSENAL 2 (Platt 82, Bergkamp 84)
BOLTON 1 (Todd 76) Att: 38,104

CHELSEA 2 (Wise 34, Spencer 88)
BLACKBURN 3 (Sherwood 36, McKinlay 47, Fenton 59) Att: 28,436

COVENTRY 0
LEEDS 0 Att: 22,769

EVERTON 1 (Parkinson 78)
ASTON VILLA 0 Att: 40,127

MAN CITY 2 (Rosler pen 71, Symons 78)
LIVERPOOL 2 (Lomas og 6, Rush 41) Att: 31,436

MIDDLESBROUGH 0
MAN UTD 3 (May 15, Cole 54, Giggs 81) Att: 29,921

NEWCASTLE 1 (Ferdinand 71)
TOTTENHAM 1 (Dozzell 57) Att: 36,589

NOTTM F 3 (Stone 44, Roy 63, Howe 77)
QPR 0 Att: 22,910

SOUTHAMPTON 0
WIMBLEDON 0 Att:15,172

WEST HAM 1 (Diks 73)
SHEFFIELD WED 1 (Newsome 90) Att: 23,790

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 12

WEEKEND

FA CUP - FINAL

LIVERPOOL 0
MAN UNITED 1 (Cantona 85) Att: 79.007

FRANCE

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 21

WEEKEND

BASTIA 1 (Rodriguez 39)
AUXERRE 1 (Saib 22) Att: 5,000

BORDEAUX 0
LENS 0 Att: 20,000

CANNES 2 (Micoud 5, Etame 11)
MONTPELLIER 1 (Delaye 31) Att: 5,000

GUEUGNON 0
LYON 0 Att: 9,603

GUINGAMP 0
RENNES 0 Att: 15,840

LILLE 1 (Simba 34)
NICE 0 Att: 7,815

MONACO 2 (Blondeau 37, Grimandi 77)
LE HAVRE 1 (Brando 45) Att: 4,000

NANTES 2 (Pignol 32, Pedros 56)
STRASBOURG 0 Att: 20,963

ST ETIENNE 1 (Chedli 77)
METZ 1 (Kastendeuch pen 57) Att: 17,508

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 28

MIDWEEK

PARIS SG 0
MARTIGUES 0 Att: 41,000

WEEKEND

AUXERRE 2 (Diomede 12, Laslandes 78)
ST ETIENNE 0 Att: 13,000

NICE 1 (Nagbe 64)
BORDEAUX 0 Att: 5,500

LE HAVRE 0
CANNES 0 Att: 9,196

LENS 2 (Meyrieu 55, Delmotte 82)
MONTPELLIER 1 (Sanchez 45) Att: 35,074

LYON 3 (Maurice 21, Giuly 33, Fouret 41)
MONACO 3 (Benarbia 14, Anderson da Silva 40, Scifo pen 83) Att: 15,000

MARTIGUES 3 (Romano 78, Ichoua 86, Sylia 89)
BASTIA 1 (Drobnjak 22) Att: 3,600

METZ 3 (Pierre 40, Pires 52, Pouget 80)
GUINGAMP 0 Att: 13,201

PARIS SG 0
LILLE 1 (Collot 87) Att: 37,762

RENNES 2 (Denis 14, Wiltord 36)
NANTES 2 (N'Doram pen 51, Pedros 59) Att: 19,777

STRASBOURG 0
GUEUGNON 0 Att: 9,018

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 5

WEEKEND

NANTES 1 (Pedros 72)
LE HAVRE 1 (Samson 32) Att: 15,000

BORDEAUX 1 (Lizarazu pen 34)
MARTIGUES 1 (Flachez 89) Att: 10,000

FRENCH CUP - FINAL

AUXERRE 2 (Blanc 52, Laslandes 88)
NIMES 1 (Belbey 25) Att: 44,921

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 12

WEEKEND

BASTIA1 (Drobnjak pen 54)
NICE 2 (Debbah 28, 75) Att: 3,090

BORDEAUX 2 (Bancarel 52, 62)
PARIS SG 2 (Djorkaeff 45, Dieng 89) Att: 25,635

CANNES 5 (Charvet 22, 35, 47, Compan 58, Horlaville 63)
LENS 2 (Boli 64, Dehu 88) Att: 4,000

GUEUGNON 1 (Traore 16)
RENNES 0 Att: 5,512

GUINGAMP 1 (Mihali 75)
AUXERRE 1 (Diomede 11) Att: 15,789

LILLE 2 (Sibierski 45, Simba 50)
LYON 1 (Maurice13) Att: 7,500

MONACO 5 (Lewinski 8, Henry 19, Anderson da Silva 73, Wreh 75, Scifo 78)
STRASBOURG 1 (Zitelli 17) Att: 3,500

MONTPELLIER 2 (Robert 78, Lefevre 86)
LE HAVRE 0 Att: 9,215

NANTES 1 (Da Rocha 4)
METZ 0 Att: 27,592

ST ETIENNE 2 (Billng pen 46, Sandjak 69)
MARTIGUES 2 (Ichoua 14, Flachez 73) Att: 16,735

GERMANY

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 21

MIDWEEK

BORUSSIA MG 1 (Dahlin 24)
KAISERSLAUTERN 1 (Wegmann 49) Att: 27,600

HANSA 2 (Akpoborie 12, Beinlich 25)
HAMBURG 0 Att: 24,900

WEEKEND

KARLSRUHE 0
KAISERSLAUTERN 0 Att: 33,515

KFC UERDINGEN 3 (Meijer 4, Steffen 77, Laessig 84)
SC FREIBURG 1 (Todt 79) Att: 6,891

BAYERN MUNICH 1 (Scholl 47)
FRANKFURT 1 (Hagner 30) Att: 63,000

FORTUNA DUSSELDORF 1 (Bach 31)
BORUSSIA DORTMUND 2 (S. Freund 36, Sammer 38) Att: 55,850

HANSA ROSTOCK 0
1860 MUNICH 3 (Bodden 41, Nowak 73, 83) Att: 20,800

KOLN 1 (Gaissmayer 85)
ST PAULI 0 Att: 32,000

WERDER BREMEN 2 (Basler 2, 51)
VfB STUTTGART 2 (Gilewicz 57, Oelkuch 87) Att: 30,000

SCHALKE 3 (Mulder 13, Anderbrugge pen, Max 54)
BORUSSIA MG 3 (Andersson 5, Sternkopf 17, Wynhoff 47) Att: 60,180

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 28

MIDWEEK

HAMBURG 2 (Albertz 20, Sporl pen 87)
BAYER LEVERKUSEN 2 (Voller 41, Sporl pen 87) Att: 15,000

KAISERSLAUTERN 3 (Kuka 4, M. Wagner 37, Wegmann 72)
KFC UERDINGEN 0 Att: 36,000

ST PAULI 2 (Driller 1, Dammann 16)
SCHALKE 0 Att: 20,654

WEEKEND

BAYER LEVERKUSEN 1 (Lehnhoff 2)
KARLSRUHE 2 (Bender 1, Tarnat 54) Att: 19,400

BAYERN MUNICH 0
HANSA 1 (Akpoborie 63) Att: 62,100

BORUSSIA DORTMUND 1 (Riedle 39)
HAMBURG 1 (Sporl pen 44) Att: 48,869

EINTRACHT FRANKFURT 1 (Schupp 58)
WERDER BREMEN 0 Att: 43,000

SC FREIBURG 1 (Decheiver 46)
1860 MUNICH 0 Att: 22,500

VfB STUTTGART 0
KOLN 1 (Polster 56) Att: 33,000

BORUSSIA MG 1 (Andersson 82)
DUSSELDORF 1 (Cyron 35) Att: 33,200

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 5

MIDWEEK

HANSA ROSTOCK 1 (R. Schneider 49)
SC FREIBURG 0 Att: 17,500

KARLSRUHE 5 (Hassler pen 6, Kirjakov 62, 65, Dundee 69, Tarnat 82)
BORUSSIA DORTMUND 0 Att: 33,515

SCHALKE 2 (Mulder 65, Max 90)
VfB STUTTGART 0 Att: 37,880

KFC UERDINGEN 3 (Lesniak 31, Steffen 47, Laessig 89)
BAYER LEVERKUSEN 0 Att: 8,112

DUSSELDORF 2 (Cyron 6, Katemann 47)
ST PAULI 0 Att: 23,000

WEEKEND

BORUSSIA DORTMUND 5 (Kohler 5, Heinrich 23, Reuter 35, 59, Zorc 43)
KFC UERDINGEN 0 Att: 48,800

SC FREIBURG 0
KAISERSLAUTERN 0 Att: 22,500

BAYER LEVERKUSEN 2 (Voller 22, Kirsten 64)
1860 MUNICH 1 (Bodden 72) Att: 22,000

BAYERN MUNICH 3 (Kostadinov 5, 62, Klinsmann 53)
KOLN 2 (Matthaus og 47, Polster pen 78) Att: 63,000

BORUSSIA MG 1 (Pettersson 60)
KARLSRUHE 2 (Dundee 33, 62) Att: 26,000

EINTRACHT FRANKFURT 0
SCHALKE 3 (Linke 14, Anderbrugge 69, Max 80) Att: 45,000

HANSA 2 (Baumgart 53, Akpoborie 58)
WERDER BREMEN 1 (Sauer 77) Att: 25,800

VfB STUTTGART 2 (Bobic 83, 89)
FORTUNA DUSSELDORF 3 (Cyron 48, 75, Judt 68) Att: 21,000

ST PAULI 1 (Stanislawski 45)
HAMBURG 1 (Schnoor 77) Att: 51,432

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 12

MIDWEEK

DORTMUND 2 (Zorc 8, Julio Cesar 73)
BAYER LEVERKUSEN 0 Att: 48,800

HANSA ROSTOCK 1 (R. Schneider 7)
SCHALKE 2 (Buskens 76, Anderbrugge pen 89) Att: 21,100

1860 MUNICH 1 (Bodden 33)
KAISERSLAUTERN 1 (Marschall 45) Att: 33,000

WERDER 3 (Hobsch 42, Bode 50, 65)
BAYERN 2 (Kostadinov 14, 23) Att: 29,600

WEEKEND

DUSSELDORF 2 (Glavas 7, Judt 26)
EINTRACHT FRANKFURT 2 (Dworschak 64, Zelic 83) Att: 27,000

SC FREIBURG 2 (Jurcevic 32, Zeyer 40)
LEVERKUSEN 1 (Sergio 77) Att: 22,500

HAMBURG 3 (Baron 7, Fischr 47, Sporl 73)
VfB STUTTGART 0 Att: 28,232

KAISERSLAUTRN 2 (Kuka 8, pen 18)
HANSA ROSTOCK 0 Att: 38,500

KARLSRUHE 2 (Dundee 50, Hassler pen 67)
ST PAULI 2 (Stanislawski 12, Springer 78) Att: 31,200

KOLN 1 (Hauptmann 31)
WERDER 2 (Basler 65, 76 pen) Att: 40,000

SCHALKE 2 (Thon 36, A. Muller 90)
BAYERN MUNICH 1 (Strunz 45) Att: 70,960

1860 MUNICH 2 (Bodden 69, 81)
DORTMUND 2 (Reuter 38, Zorc 65) Att: 66,000

KFC UERDINGEN 0
BORUSSIA MG 2 (Sternkopf 5, 34) Att: 20,154

HOLLAND

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 21

WEEKEND

PSV 1 (Gudjohnson 37)
NEC NIJMEGEN 0 Att: 26,000

RODA JC 5 (Babangida 14, Ooijer 40, Van Galen 52, Graef 83, Kasperski 88)
GA EAGLES 0 Att: 8,500

WILLEM II 1 (Konterman 5)
DE GRAAFSCHAP 1 (Victoria 87) Att: 7,400

FEYENOORD 1 (Koeman 60)
FORTUNA SITTARD 0 Att: 20,268

GRONINGEN 3 (Sion 24, 78, Bombarda 40)
AJAX 4 (Litmanen 30, 44, Kanu 47, Wooter 90) Att: 17,200

RKC WAALWIJK 0
SPARTA RITTERDAM 0 Att: 3,400

FC TWENTE 0
HEERENVEEN 1 (De Visser 34) Att: 6,400

UTRECHT 2 (Hofstede 22, 31)
VITESSE ARNHEM 0 Att: 9,500

VOLENDAM 1 (Stefanovic 89)
NAC 2 (Vidmar 14, Van Wonderen 60) Att: 4,200

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 28

WEEKEND

AJAX 5 (Litmanen 18, Van Fessem 32, George 34, 70, 72)
WILLEM II 1 (De Gier 82) Att: 19,280

FORTUNA SITTARD 1 (Jeffrey 56)
RODA JC 1 (De Kock 27) Att: 9,500

GA EAGLES 1 (Rorije 44)
RKC 3 (Wrede 24, Petrovic 55, Wijnhard 81) Att: 6,500

HEERENVEEN 4 (Wouden 4, Persijn 60, Echteld 82, 84)
VOLENDAM 3 (Samardzic 35, Simons 45,79) Att: 13,400

NAC BREDA 0
FEYENOORD 3 (Maas 9, Trustfull 87, Koeman 90) Att: 10,850

NEC NIJMEGEN 0
GRONINGEN 2 (Beerens 15, Koeman 25) Att: 4,000

SPARTA 2 (Jalink 61, Groenendijk 76)
PSV 1 (Cocu 83) Att: 6,500

UTRECHT 1 (Redeker 84)
DE GRAAFSCHAP 1 (Meijer 20) Att: 14,000

VITESSE 2 (Makaay 21, Shoukov 32)
FC TWENTE 0 Att: 5,946

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 5

WEEKEND

FEYENOORD 4 (Trustfull 29, Heus 49, Larsson 69, 80)
HEERENVEEN 1 (Hellinga 83) Att: 26,000

DE GRAAFSCHAP 0
AJAX 0 Att: 10,500

GRONINGEN 5 (Bombarda 17, 25, 85, Huizingh 23, Koeman 60)
SPARTA 1 (Renfurm 66) Att: 11,592

PSV 3 (Zenden 20, Cocu 54, Nilis 73)
GA EAGLES 1 (Rorje 17) Att: 27,800

RKC WAALWIJK 1 (Muller 12)
FORTUNA 1 (Van der Weert 20) Att: 3,900

RODA JC 5 (De Kock 7, Babangida 40, 56, 61, Vurens 52)
NAC BREDA 1 (Arnold 82) Att: 11,000

FC TWENTE 1 (Volmer 73)
UTRECHT 2 (Graanogst 48, Visser 88) Att: 8,300

VOLENDAM 1 (Persijn 23)
VITESSE 1 (Jochemsen78) Att: 5,000

WILLEM II 1 (De Gier 35)
NEC 3 (Langerak 39, Van Eijkeren 50, Janssen 56) Att: 7,200

DUTCH CUP - SEMI-FINAL

PSV 3 (Cocu 65, Nilis 81, Eijkelkamp 88)
RODA JC 1 (Ooijer 26) Att: 17,500

ITALY

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 21

WEEKEND

CAGLIARI 2 (Pancaro 60, O'Neill 76)
VICENZA 0 Att: 17,414

CREMONESE 0
PIACENZA 0 Att: 8,066

FIORENTINA 1 (Banchelli 18)
ATALANTA 0 Att: 35,394

INTER 1 (Banchelli 18)
JUVENTUS 2 (Lombardo 5, Conte 55) Att: 73,260

PADOVA 2 (Cuicchi 11, Amoruso 48)
UDINESE 3 (Bierhoff 9, pen 19, Amoruso 48) Att: 11,521

PARMA 3 (Baggio 7, Inzaghi 25, Piro 90)
BARI 1 (Andersson 11) Att: 22,760

ROMA 4 (Delvecchio 41, 80, 84, Cruz og 49)
NAPOLI 1 (Pecchia 72) Att: 49,685

SAMPDORIA 3 (Balleri 26, Mancini 54, Chiesa pen 87)
LAZIO 3 (Casiraghi 19, Signori 36, 65) Att: 27,921

TORINO 1 (Cristallini pen 81)
MILAN 1 (Maldini 67) Att: 22,025

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 28

WEEKEND

ATALANTA 1 (Morfeo 34)
LAZIO 3 (Valentini og 13, Signori pen 58, Esposito 85) Att: 15,000

BARI 4 (Andersson 4, 63, Parente 14, 45)
UDINESE 2 (Marino 7, Bierhoff 84) Att: 18,000

CAGLIARI 0
INTER 0 Att: 22,000

MILAN 3 (Savicevic 14, Baggio pen 45, Simone76)
FIORENTINA 1 (Rui Costa) Att: 79,415

NAPOLI 1 (Di Napoli pen 86)
SAMPDORIA 0 Att:30,000

PIACENZA 4 (Caccia 6, Cappellini 23, Di Francesco 46, Moretti 49)
PADOVA 0 Att: 11,000

AS ROMA 2 (Delvecchio 5, Moriero 54)
JUVENTUS 2 (Cappioli og 64, Padovano 71) Att: 64,008

TORINO 1 (Mezzano 40)
CREMONESE 0 Att: 15,000

VICENZA 0
PARMA 1 (Benarrivo 79) Att: 17,044

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 5

MIDWEEK

ITALIAN CUP - FINAL, 1ST LEG

FIORENTINA 1 (Batistuta 52)
ATALANTA 0 Att: 40,000

WEEKEND

CREMONESE 1 (Tentoni 66)
VICENCZA 1 (Murgita 42) Att: 6,302

FIORENTINA 1 (Batistuta 9)
AS ROMA 4 (Balbo pen 20, 34 pen, Delvecchio 27, 90) Att: 36,172

INTER 3 (Ince 34, Branca 39, Ganz 52)
BARI 0 Att: 41,871

JUVENTUS 1 (Deschamps 67)
ATALANTA 0 Att: 39,092

LAZIO 1 (Di Matteo 19)
NAPOLI 0 Att: 45,911

PADOVA 2 (Vlaovic 28, Serao 59)
CAGLIARI 1 (Lantignotti 4) Att: 10,332

PARMA 1 (Zola 36)
TORINO 0 Att: 24,779

SAMPDORIA 3 (Chiesa 1, 35, Mancini 38)
MILAN 0 Att: 28,320

UDINESE 0
PIACENZA 0 Att: 14,644

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 12

WEEKEND

ATALANTA 3 (Serao og 11, Sgro15, Herrera 54)
PADOVA 0 Att: 14,338

BARI 2 (Protti 45, 86)
JUVENTUS 2 (Montanari og 32, Vialli 69) Att: 27,711

CAGLIARI 2 (Sensini og 41, Oliveira pen 75)
PARMA 0 Att: 15,043

MILAN 7 (De Agostini og 7, Weah 59, Giandebiaggi og 61, Panucci 66, Di Canio 83, 86, Boban 85)
CREMONESE 1 (Florjancic 23) Att: 61,731

NAPOLI 2 (Pizzi pen 40, Policano 72)
UDINESE 1 (Pecchia og 28) Att: 41,006

PIACENZA 0
FIORENTINA 1 (Maccoppi og 21) Att: 12,036

AS ROMA 1 (Di Biagio pen 44)
INTER 0 Att: 67,333

TORINO 0
LAZIO 2 (Boksic 1, Signori 10) Att: 15,212

VICENZA 2 (Mannini og 19, Murgita 33)
SAMPDORIA 2 (Seedorf 21, Mancini 83) Att: 16,996

PORTUGAL

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 21

WEEKEND

FELGUEIRAS 0
SPORTING LISBON 1 (Peixe 3)

TIRSENSE 2 (Gaspar 9, Rebelo 84)
FC PORTO 4 (Joao Manuel Pinto 28, Rui Barros 39, Folha 47, Bino 81)

BELENENSES 2 (Catanha 44, Barny 60)
GIL VICENTE 2 (Janovic 12, Carlitos 32)

BENFICA 0
FARENSE 1 (Jorge Soares 90)

ESTRELA AMADORA 2 (Bambo 14, Marquinhos 43)
CHAVES 3 (Riva 24, Tonino 55, 70)

SALGUEIROS 0
BOAVISTA 2 (Artur 51, Litos 79)

UNIAO LEIRIA 4 (Hugo 41, Porfiorio 53, Fua 87, Mauricio pen 90)
CAMPOMAIORENSE 0

VIT GUIMARAES 2 (Capucho 34, Edinho 90)
LECA 0

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 28

MIDWEEK

GUIMARAES 2 (Capucho 34, Edinho 90)
LECA 0

PORTUGUESE CUP - SEMI-FINAL REPLAY

SPORTING 1 (Afonso Matins 107)
FC PORTO 0

WEEKEND

BENFICA 1 (Paulao 81)
FELGUEIRAS 0 (Lewis 81)

BOAVISTA 1 (Jaime Alves 8)
TIRSENSE 1 (Monteiro 29)

CAMPOMAIORENSE 3 (Stefanovic 21, Stoilov 45, Arriaga 80)
MARITIMO 1 (Bunbury 58)

DESPORTIVO CHAVES 1 (Tonino 23)
BELENENSES 0

GIL VICENTE 0
SPORTING 2 (P Alves 28, C Xavier pen 84)

LECA 0
ESTRELA 2 (Jose Carlos 22, Renato 26)

FC PORTO 2 (Edmilsson pen 15, Quinzinho 38)
VITORIA GUIMARAES 3 (Edinho 3 pen, Ricardo 30, Zahovic 82)

SPORTING BRAGA 2 (Sergio 52, Barrosa 81)
SALGUEIROS 2 (Basilio 2, Barroso 81)

FARENSE 0
UNIAO LEIRIA 2 (Porfirio 60, Carlos Costa 83)

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 5

MIDWEEK

FARENSE 1 (Carlos Costa 83)
UNIAO LEIRIA 1 (Porfirio 60)

PORTUGUESE SUPER CUP - REPLAY

SPORTING LISBON 3 (Sa Pinto 9, 39, Carlos Xavier 85)
FC PORTO 0

WEEKEND

BELENENSES 5 (Catanha 11, 74, Tulipa 35, Cesar Brito 55, Paulo Gomes 73)
LECA 0

ESTRELA AMADORA 1 (Renato 89)
FC PORTO 1 (Renato 89)

GIL VICENTE 2 (Carlitos 16, Lim 22)
FELGUEIRAS 0

MARITIMO 0
FARENSE 0

SALGUEIROS 0
CAMPOMAIORENSE 2 (Hasselbaink 64, Nuno Luis 68)

SPORTING LISBON 4 (Alfonso Martin 22, Dominquez 40, Tonanha 60, Carlos Xavier 75)
CHAVES 1 (Sa Pinto 65)

TIRENSE 2 (Rui Manuel 5, Krstic pen 86)
SPORTING BRAGA 0

UNIAO LEIRIA 0
BENFICA 2 (Paulo Bento 44, Valdo 90)

VITORIA GUIMARAES 1 (Zahovic 17)
BOAVISTA 3 (Sergio Duarte 39, Artur pen 74, Jaime Alves 86)

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 12

WEEKEND

BENFICA 5 (Joao Pinto 8, 71, 76, Dimas 19, Paredao 90)
MARITIMO 1 (Bunbury 81)

BOAVISTA 1 (Nuno Gomes 68)
ESTRELA AMADORA 1 (Chainho 27)

CAMPOMAIORENSE 3 (Stoilov 52, Hasselbaink 58, 86)
TIRSENSE 1 (Ristic 65)

DESP. CHAVES 1 (Rui Alberto 80)
GIL VICENTE 0

FELGUEIRAS 3 (Sergio Conceicao 4, Lewis 8, Krstic 89)
UNIAO LEIRIA 0

LECA 1 (Cao 25)
SPORTING 1 (Carlos Xavier 75)

FC PORTO 1 (Edmilson 60)
BELENENSES 0

SPORTING BRAGA 4 (Toni 11, 48, Bruno 30, Barroso pen 53)
VITORIA GUIMARAES 0

FARENSE 4 (Cacioli 1, Idalecio 32, Hajry pen 53, Marco Nuno 89)
SALGUEIROS 1 (Abilio 45)

SCOTLAND

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 21

MIDWEEK

PARTICK THISTLE 1 (McWilliams 10)
ABERDEEN 1 (Booth 2) Att: 4,500

WEEKEND

ABERDEEN 1 (Windass pen 53)

HEARTS 1 (Locke 63) Att: 11,000
CELTIC 4 (Thom 11, 41, Cadete 86, Donnelly 90)
FALKIRK 0 Att: 35,895

HIBERNIAN 1 (McGinlay 82)
RAITH 1 (Millar 47) Att: 7,571

KILMARNOCK 2 (Skilling 63, Black pen 84)
PARTICK 1 (Turner 73) Att: 7,276

MOTHERWELL 1 (Arnott 68)
RANGERS 3 (McCall 4, Andersen 43, Gascoigne 58) Att: 13,128

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 28

WEEKEND

FALKIRK 1 (McGrillen 55)
HIBERNIAN 1 (McGinlay 59) Att: 2,706

HEARTS 1 (McManus 60)
KILMARNOCK 0 Att: 11,329

PARTICK 2 (Henderson 5, Lyons 31)
CELTIC 4 (Van Hooijdonk 21, pen 70, Cadete 54, Mackay 85) Att: 13,940

RAITH 2 (Duffield 33, Thomson 55)
MOTHERWELL 0 Att: 3,685

RANGERS 3 (Gascoigne 21, 81, 88 pen)
ABERDEEN 1 (Irvine 19) Att: 47,247

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 5

WEEKEND

ABERDEEN 2 (Glass 16, McGowan og 46)
FALKIRK 1 (McGrillen 45) Att: 11,000

CELTIC 4 (Cadete 2, 61, Gray 37, Grant 42)
RAITH ROVERS 1 (Duffield 50) Att: 37,423

HIBERNIAN 1 (D. Jackson 88)
PARTICK THISTLE 0 Att: 6,841

KILMARNOCK 0
RANGERS 3 (McCoist 22, Durie 41, 74) Att: 17,056

MOTHERWELL 1 (Davies 46)
HEARTS 1 (Cameron 38) Att: 8,301

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 12

WEEKEND

SCOTTISH LGE PLAY-OFF - 1ST LEG

PARTICK THISTLE 1 (Lyons 19)
DUNDEE UTD 1 (Dailly 86) Att: 10,500

SPAIN

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 21

WEEKEND

BARCELONA 1 (Jordi 26)
ATLETICO MADRID 3 (Roberto 10, Vizcaino 48, Biagini 87) Att: 120,000

VALENCIA 2 (Viola 5, 42)
SANTANDER 1 (Villabona 16) Att: 45,000

BILBAO 2 (Valverde 41, Ciganda 69)
TENERIFE 0 Att: 40,000

COMPOSTELA 2 (Lekumberri 10, T Catro 73)
REAL SOCIEDAD 0 Att: 10,000

MERIDA 1 (Corino77)
REAL VALLADOLID 0 Att: 14,000

RAYO VALLECANO 1 (Aquino pen 42)
CELTA VIGO 3 (Sanchez 1, Milojevic 8, Alejo 16) Att: 9,000

REAL BETIS 2 (Kowalczyk 21, Vidakovic 70)
SPORTING GIJON 5 (Mario 2, Lediakhov 20, Julio Salinas 38, 51, D. Cano 89) Att: 30,000

REAL OVIEDO 2 (Onopko 36, Dubovsky 64)
SEVILLA 3 (Rafa Paz 47, 64, Monchu 68) Att: 14,000

REAL MADRID 1 (Raul 52)
ESPANYOL 2 (Lardin 50, 53) Att: 80,000

REAL ZARAGOZA 2 (Morientes 44, Aragon pen 76)
LA CORUNA 3 (Donato pen 24, David 34, Manjarin 73) Att: 23,000

SALAMANCA 2 (Tomas og 36, Stinga 86)
ALBACETE 4 (Luna 6, Pedro Riesco 34, Zalazar 48, Bjelica pen 72) Att: 15,000

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 28

WEEKEND

ATLETICO MADRID 2 (Pantic 45, Geli 57)
VALENCIA 3 (Geli 12 og, Mijatovic pen 55, Poyatos 74) Att: 45,000

ALBACETE 0
TENERIFE 0 Att: 8,000

CELTA VIGO 1 (Sanchez 12)
REAL MADRID 1 (Zamorano 1) Att: 27,000

LA CORUNA 1 (Radchenko 90)
RAYO VALLECANO 0 Att: 26,000

MERIDA 1 (Luis 90)
ATHLETIC BILBAO 0 Att: 15,000

RACING SANTANDER 1 (Faizulin 39)
COMPOSTELA 0 Att: 16,000

REAL SOCIEDAD 1 (Gracia 21)
SALAMANCA 0 Att: 20,000

REAL VALLADOLID 0
REAL ZARAGOZA 0 Att: 22,000

SEVILLA 1 (Suker 25)
REAL BETIS 0 Att: 3,460

SPORTING GIJON 0
BARCELONA 3 (De la Pena 4, Hagi 15, Oscar 26) Att: 29,200

WEEKEND

COMPOSTELA1 (Christensen 87)
ATLETICO MADRID 3 (Caminero 7, 80, Simeone 48) Att: 13,000

VALENCIA 1 (Viola 57)
SPORTING GIJON 0 Att: 45,000

ATH. BILBAO 2 (Guerrero 45, Etxeberria 55)
ALBACETE 2 (Pedro Riesco 61, Ortega 84) Att: 30,000

BARCELONA 1 (Bakero 50)
SEVILLA 1 (Moya 23) Att: 85,000

RAYO VALLECANO 0
REAL VALLADOLID 2 (Peternac pen 72, Quevedo pen 89) Att: 10,000

REAL OVIEDO 1 (Christiansen pen 72)
CELTA VIGO 1 (Gudelj 9) Att: 12,691

REAL MADRID 1 (Luis Enrique 60)
LA CORUNA 0 Att: 60,000

ZARAGOZA 3 (Pardeza 9, Poyet 71, Lopez 75)
MERIDA 1 (Sinval 20) Att: 30,000

SALAMANCA 5 (Latorre 2, Stinga 9, 41, pen 73, Claudio 21)
RACING SANTANDER 0 Att: 13,000

TENERIFE 1 (Pizzi 71)
REAL SOCIEDAD 0 Att: 17,000

REAL BETIS 2 (Urzaiz og 34, Pier 86)
ESPANYOL 3 (Urzaiz 33, Lardin 45, 54) Att: 40,000

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 12

MIDWEEK

ESPANYOL 5 (Urzaiz 18, Lardin 23, 74, Brnovic 53, Torres Mestre 82)
REAL OVIEDO 0 Att: 15,000

WEEKEND

ESPANYOL 0
BARCELONA 0
Abandoned due to heavy rain

ATLETICO MADRID 2 (Kiko 17, 85)
SALAMANCA 1 (Stinga 66) Att: 55,000

CELTA VIGO 2 (Gudelj 7, Carlos 90)
REAL BETIS 0 Att: 20,000

LA CORUNA 0
REAL OVIEDO 4 (Carlos 15, 72, Jerkan 68, Ivan 850 Att: 30,000

MERIDA 0
RAYO VALLECANO 1 (Barla 57) Att: 15,000

RACING SANTANDER 1 (Faizulin 10)
TENERIFE 2 (Pizzi 78, Chano 81) Att: 16,000

REAL SOCIEDAD 8 (Purk 15, 46, Craioveanu 32, 65, 80 Luis Perez 35, 73, Emery 60)
ALBACETE 1 (Zalazar 7) Att: 26,000

REAL VALLADOLID 0
REAL MADRID 3 (Lasa 78, Raul 80, Guti 84) Att: 25,000

REAL ZARAGOZA 1 (Poyet 75)
ATHLETIC BILBAO 0 Att: 28,000

SEVILLA 1 (Suker 75)
VALENCIA 2 (Mijatovic pen 34, 65) Att: 62,517

SPORTING GIJON 2 (Lediakhov pen 7, 77)
COMPOSTELA 1 (Christiansen 17) Att: 25,000

SWITZERLAND

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 21

MIDWEEK

BASEL 0
GRASSHOPPER 2 (Erceg 71, Turkyilmaz 76) Att: 8,500

NEUCHATEL XAMAX 1 (Isabella 18)
SERVETTE 1 (Neuville 30) Att: 8,200

ST GALLEN 1 (Zellweger 71)
LUCERNE 0 Att: 4,500

SION 2 (Quentin 29, Giallanza 88)
AARAU 0 Att: 8,000

WEEKEND

BASEL 1 (H. Yakin 46)
LUCERNE 0 Att: 8,000

GRASSHOPPER 3 (Gren 3, Ibrahim 57, Koch 73 og)
ST GALLEN 0 Att: 5,300

NEUTCHATEL XAMAX 3 (Isabella 5, 63, Moldovan 86)
AARAU 1 (D. Wyss pen) Att: 7,200

SERVETTE 0
SION 1 (Vidmar 72) Att: 7,000

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, APRIL 28

MIDWEEK

SWISS CUP - QUARTER-FINAL

NEUCHATEL XAMAX 2
BASEL 1 *(aet)*

WEEKEND

AARAU 3 (Skrzypczak 18, Kirik 50, Ratinho 78)
SERVETTE 0 Att: 4,100

LUCERNE 1 (Aleksandrov 30)
GRASSHOPPER 2 (Abdullahi 68, Gren pen 81) Att: 13,400

ST GALLEN 3 (Buhlmann 35, Diallo pen 83, 84)
BASEL 0 Att: 5,500

SION 1 (Vidmar 25)
NEUCHATEL 1 (Moldovan 23) Att: 14,500

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 5

MIDWEEK

AARAU 1 (Ratinho 13)
BASEL 0 Att: 5,100

SERVETTE 3 (Ippoliti 11, 66, Margarini 86)
ST GALLEN 2 (Diallo 42, Mouidi 70) Att: 3,000

SION 0
GRASSHOPPER 0 Att: 13,400

NEUCHATEL XAMAX 1 (Kunz 51)
LUCERNE 1 (Gmur 71) Att: 5,200

WEEKEND

BASEL 2 (M. Yakin 73, Rey 85)
SION 0 Att: 5,000

GRASSHOPPER 2 (Vega 14, Erceg 64)
SERVETTE 0 Att: 9,400

LUCERNE 4 (Aleksandrov 16, Sawu 62, 75, Fink 75)
AARAU 0 Att: 12,540

ST GALLEN 0
NEUCHATEL XAMAX 0 Att: 4,500

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, MAY 12

MIDWEEK

LUCERNE 1 (Sawu 77)
BASEL 1 (Yakin 84) Att: 12,200

SWISS CUP - SEMI-FINALS

NEUCHATEL 0 SERVETTE 1

FC SION 2 ST GALLEN 1

WEEKEND

AARAU 0
GRASSHOPPER 0 Att: 5,600

NEUCHATEL XAMAX 1 (Moldovan 56)
BASEL 1 (H. Yakin 8) Att: 4,000

SERVETTE 3 (Sesa pen 40, Baumann 43, Barberis 65)
LUCERNE 4 (Sawu 8, Aleksandrov 14, Kogl pen 37, Duchosal og 80) Att: 2,800

FC SION 3 (Bonvin 54, 75, Moser 72)
ST GALLEN 1 (Leandro pen 86) Att: 7,000

INTERNATIONAL RESULTS

SUNDAY, APRIL 7

Apr 7 - St George's - WC CONCACAF qual
GRENADA 6 (Charles 32, Francis 39, Munroe og 44, Fletcher 50, 73, 82)
GUYANA 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 4,000
Grenada won 8-1 on agg

Apr 7 - CONCACAF qual
ST KITTS *walkover* **v BAHAMAS**, *withdrew*

MONDAY, APRIL 8

Apr 8 - Brazzaville - intl friendly
CONGO 2 (Moukasa 14 pen, 88)
ZAIRE 1 (Mkelenda 47)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 4,000

TUESDAY, APRIL 9

Apr 9 - Baku - intl friendly
AZERBAIJAN 0
TURKEY 1 (Rahim 48)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 31,000. **Ref:** Kvaratselia (Geo)
Azerbaijan: Hasanov - Getman, Kassimov, Akhmedov, Lickin - Abishev (Nosenko 46), Agayev, Diniev (Rizaiev 46), Kadyrov - Souleymanov, V Kassumov (Gouseinov 83).
Turkey: Sanver (Adnan 46) - Cuneyt (Ilhan 46), Erkan, Vedat, Rahim - Ibrahim (Osman 46), Umit, Selahattin (K Umit 46), Faruk (Erbil 82) - Engin (M Ali 85), Saffet.

Apr 9 - Chisinau - intl friendly
MOLDOVA 2 (Testimitsanu 73, Popovich 83)
UKRAINE 2 (Gousseinov 47, 67)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 7,000. **Ref:** Zhuk (Bye)
Moldova: Romanenko - Seku, Testimitsanu, Kulibaba, Belous (Popovich 46), Shishkin (Parkhomenko 46) - Rebeja (Kushuk 46), Gaidamaschouk, Miterev (Kirilev 62), Kurtianu, Yepurianu (Spynu 86).
Ukraine: Suslov - Luzhni (Bejenar 68), Parfionov, Golovko (Vaschuk 68), Shmatovalenko (Mihailenko 68) - Zabchenko, Orbu, Kardash (Pokhlebaiev 68), Gousseinov - Kriventsov, Antiukhli (Sevchenko 68).

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10

Apr 10 - Osijek - intl friendly
CROATIA 4 (Brajkovic 6, Suker 23, Pamic 65, Stanic 75)
HUNGARY 1 (Nagy 39)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Verdenik (Svk)
Hungary: Hajdu - Telek, Sebok, Jagodics - Lendvai (Madar 46), A Horvath (Szekeres 80), Iles, Arany (Lisztes 46), N Nagy - Orosz, Egressy.
Croatia: Mrmic - Jerkan, Bilic (Bicanic 46), Pavlicic, Brajkovic - Balajic, Stanic, Pamic (Stefulj 77) - Mornar, Suker, Cvitanovic (Vugrinec 71).

SUNDAY, APRIL 21

Apr 21 - Kingston - WC CONCACAF qual
JAMAICA 1 (Davis 72)
SURINAM 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 20,000.
Jamaica won 2-0 on agg

Apr 21 - Asuncion - friendly intl
PARAGUAY 3 (Gamarra 21, Baez 53, Ferreira 60)
BOSNIA 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Velazquez (Par)
Paraguay: Chilavert - Arce, Gamarra, Saravia, Rivarola, Acuna, Struway, Sotelo, Ferreira, Baez, Campos.
Bosnia: Goran - Skoko, Kordic, Bubalo, Bavic, Rablik, Bogtan, Matan, Marinovic, Musa, Smaruzic.

Apr 21 - Banjul - intl friendly
GAMBIA 1 (Jammeh 17)
SENEGAL 2 (Gomis 12, 40)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 4,000

TUESDAY, APRIL 23

Apr 23 - Antofagasta - intl friendly
CHILE 3 (Zamorano 52, 82, Valencia 62)
AUSTRALIA 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Ruscio (Arg)
Chile: Tapia - Mendoza, R Fuentes, M Ramirez, Margas - Parraguez (Valencia 46), Musrri (Galdames 46), Estay, Vega (Salas 63) - Zamorano (Nunez 89), Rozental (Goldberg 46).
Australia: Bosnich - Kulscar, Durakovic, Longo (Trimboli 16), Muscat - Kewell, Bernal, Wade, Tapai (Spink 78) - Tiatto (Ardone 38; Agostino 68), Spiteri.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24

Apr 24 - Buenos Aires - WC South America
ARGENTINA 3 (Ortega 8, 18, Batistuta 49)
BOLIVIA 1 (Baldivieso 42)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 60,000. **Ref:** Sanchez (Chi)
Argentina: Passet - Zanetti, Ayala, Sensini, Chamot, Simeone, Almeyda, Ortega, Morales, Caniggia (Balbo 72), Batistuta (C Lopez 87).
Bolivia: Barrero - Rimba, Pena, Paraba, Oscar Sanchez, Ramos (Ivan Castillo 80), Coimbra (Paniagua 77), Tufino, Baldivieso, Etcheverry (Juan Suarez 78), Ramiro Castillo.

Apr 24 Barranquilla - WC S America
COLOMBIA 1 (F Asprilla 55)
PARAGUAY 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 60,000. **Ref:** Javier Castrilli (Arg)
Colombia: Mondragon - Perez (Estrada 69), Bermudez, Mendoza, Moreno, Alvarez, Serna, C Valderrama, Rincon, Valenciano (Valencia 75), F Asprilla.
Paraguay: Chilavert - Arce, Gamarra, Celso Ayala, Rivarola, Jara (Sarabia 80), Acuna, Sotelo, Struway, Ferreira (Benitez 64), Campos (Rojas 69).

. . . SOUTH AMERICAN WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS GET UNDER WAY . . . PRE-EURO 96 WARM-UPS . . .

Apr 24 - Guayaquil - WC S America
ECUADOR 4 (Hurtado 54, 90, Tenorio 65, Gavica 77)
PERU 1 (Palacios 62)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 65,000. **Ref:** Matto (Uru)
Ecuador: Morales - Rivera, Montano, Ivan Hurtado (Obregon 84), Capurro, De Souza, Tenorio, Carabali (Carabali 46), Aguinaga, Fernandez (Gavica 76), E Hurtado.
Peru: Miranda - Solano, Reynoso, Marengo, Ferrari (Magallanes 67), Carranza, Jayo, Del Solar, Palacios, Maestri, Guadalupe (Ramirez 68).

Apr 24 - Caracas - WC S America
VENEZUELA 0
URUGUAY 2 (Otero 54, Poyet 71)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 12,000. **Ref:** Tejada (Per)
Venezuela: Angelucci - Filosa, William Gonzalez, Tortolero, Leonardo Gonzalez, Vallenilla, Valiente (Macintosh 74), Hernandez, Castellin, Diaz (Rivas 55), Guerra.
Uruguay: Arbiza - Olivera, Herrera, Moas, Montero, Saralegui, Gutierrez, Bengoechea (Abeijon 90), Poyet, Otero (Cedres 87), Fonseca*. * = *Fonseca sent off, 67min.*

Apr 24 - Brussels - intl friendly
BELGIUM 0
RUSSIA 0
Att: 11,000. **Ref:** Cesari (Ita)
Belgium : Vande Walle - Genaux, Medved, Renier, Leonard - Albert (Verjans 68), Peiremans, Schepens, Scifo - Nilis, Lauwers (Pierre 62).
Russia: Cherchesov (Kharine 46) - Radimov, Nikiforov, Kovtun, Onopko - Kanchelskis, Beschastnykh, Karpin, Mostovoi, Kolyvanov (Simutenkov 76), Kiryakov (Radchenko 68).

Apr 24 - Zenica - intl friendly
BOSNIA 0
ALBANIA 0
Att: 15,000. **Ref:** Pjojliak (Cro)
Bosnia: Omerovic - Varesanovic (Music 66), Begic, Konjic, Katana - A Susic, Jozic, Demirovic (Dedic 86), Kodro (Stufac 75) - Mujcin (Sabanovic 46), Baljic (Bradaric 78).
Albania: Nallbani (Kapliani 67) - Behari (Bogiani 86), Mergiishi, Dede, Malko - A Xhumba, Vata (Mema 43), Bozgo (Baholli 76) - Bushi (Halili 81) - Prenga (Peco 63), Kacaci (Koca 46).

Apr 24 - Prague - intl friendly
CZECH REP 2 (Frydek 61, Kuka 69)
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 6,118. **Ref:** Strampe (Ger)
Czech Rep: Koubac - Kadlec (Kubik 46), Hornak (Rada 73), Repka, Latal (Nedved 59), Nemecek (Bejbl 46), Berger, Frydek, Hapal, Drulak, Kuka (Kerbr 78).
Ireland: Given - Cunningham, McGrath (Flemming 46), Babb (McGoldrick 77), Kenna, Houghton, Kennedy, Townsend, Irwin, Moore, Quinn.

Apr 24 - Copenhagen - intl friendly
DENMARK 2 (M Laudrup 7, B Laudrup 27)
SCOTLAND 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 23,021. **Ref:** Wegerees (Hol)
Denmark: Schmeichel (Krogh 46) - Rieper, Olsen, Risager (Laursen 80), Helveg, Schjoenberg, Steen Nielsen, Thomsen, M Laudrup (A Nielsen 85), B Laudrup, Beck.
Scotland: Leighton (Goram 46) - McKimmie, McKinlay, Hendry (McKinlay 74), Boyd, McCall (Gemmill 46), McAllister, Collins, Spencer (McCoist 71), Gallacher (Jackson 71), Burley.

Apr 24 - Wembley - intl friendly
ENGLAND 0
CROATIA 0
Att: 33,650. **Ref:** Przesmycki (Pol)
England: Seaman - Neville, Pearce, Ince, Wright, McManaman, Platt, Gascoigne, Fowler, Sheringham, Stone.
Croatia: Mrmic - Pavlicic (Mladenovic 75), Jarni, Stimac (Soldo 58), Jerkan, Bilic, Asanovic, Prosinecki, Suker, Boban (Stanic 45), Boksic (Pomic 71).

Apr 24 - Tallinn - intl friendly
ESTONIA 0
ICELAND 3 (B Gunnlaugsson 8, 22, 30)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Lajkus (Lit)
Estonia: Poom - Lemsalu, Lindmaa, Hohlov-Simson, Zelinski (Krom 79) - Linnumae (T Kallaste 58), Olumets, Reim, Kirs - Kristal, Rajala.
Iceland: B Kristinsson (K Finnbogason 70) - L O Sigurdsson, A Gretarsson, Bergsson (Gislasson 77), Adolfsson - R Kristinsson, Si Jonsson (H Stefansson 77), O Thordarspon, A Gudjohnsen (E Gudjohnsen 62) - Sverrisson, B Gunnlaugsson (T Gudjonsson 46).

Apr 24 - Athens - WC Euro gp 1
GREECE 2 (D Batista 56, Nikolaides 66)
SLOVENIA 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 9,000. **Ref:** Pedersen (Den)
Greece: Atmatsidis - Apostolakis, Kasapis, Ouzounidis, Kalitzakis, Costantinidis (Alexandris 46), Zagorakis, Vrizas, Batista, Tsartas (Franzeskos 82), Donis (Nikolaides 61).
Slovenia: Boskovic - Galic, Englaro, Milanic, Jermanis, Ceh, Novak, Zidan (Gajser 36), Udovic (Gliha 70), Gregor, Florjancic.

Apr 24 - Rotterdam - intl friendly
HOLLAND 0
GERMANY 1 (Klinsmann 19 pen)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 26,000. **Ref:** Collina (Ita)
Holland: Van der Sar - Veldman (Stam 79), Blind, F de Boer, Bogarde, Bergkamp, Seedorf, Richard Witschge (Cocu 56), Taument (Mulder 56), J Cruyff, Hoekstra.
Germany: Kopke - Sammer (Helmer 46), Reuter, Kohler, Eilts (Babbel 79), Freund, Ziege, Hassler (Kuntz 89), Basler (Scholl 83), Klinsmann, Bierhoff.

Apr 24 - Budapest - intl friendly
HUNGARY 0
AUSTRIA 2 (Polster 12, Marasek 67)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Michel (Svk)
Hungary: Petry - Banfi (Baranyi 80), Telek (Vaczi 46), Halmai (Seboek 75), Plokai, Horvath (Madar 46), Balog (Florian 67), Illes (Egressy 46), Nagy, Vincze, Horvath.
Austria: Konsel (Wohlfahrt 46) - Feiersinger, Hatz*, Pfeffer, Wetl (Schoettel 70), Schopp, Heraf (Herzog 46), Stoeger (Kitzbichler 46), Marasek, Vastic (Artner 46), Polster (Ogris 77). * = *Hatz sent off, 67min.*

Apr 24 - Skopje - WC Euro gp 8
MACEDONIA 3 (Milosevski 5, Babunski 49pen, Zaharievski 80)
LIECHTENSTEIN 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 12,000
Macedonia: Celeski - Babunski, Markovski (Nikolovski 60), Jovanovski, Stojkovski, Milosevski, Milosavov, Gosev (Zaharievski 75), Ciric, Boskovski, Hristov (Naumovski 71).
Liechtenstein: Heeb - Hanselmann, Hasler, Stocker, Zech, C Frick, D Frick, M Frick, Hilti, Oehri, Telser (Sele 51).

Apr 24 - Belfast - intl friendly
NORTHERN IRELAND 1 (McMahon 84)
SWEDEN 2 (Dahlin 21, Ingesson 58)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 5,666. **Ref:** Dallas (Sco)
N Ireland: Davison - Patterson, Worthington (Quinn 77), Hill, Hunter, Morrow, McCarthy, Lomas, McMahon, O'Neill (O'Boyle 65), Rowland.
Sweden: Andersson - R Nilsson, P Andersson, Bjorklund, Sundgren, Schwarz, Wilbran (Zetterberg 46), Ingesson, Thern, Dahlin (Larsson 80), K Andersson (Pettersson 58).

Apr 24 - Oslo - intl friendly
NORWAY 0
SPAIN 0
Att: 11,898. **Ref:** Dardenne (Ger)
Norway: Grodas - Haland, T Pedersen (Lundekvam 80), Berg, Bjornebye (R Nilsen 77) - Rudi, Solbakken, Rekdal, J I Jakobsen (Svindal Larsen 46) - Solskjaer, Fjortoft (Ostenstad 77).
Spain: Zubizarreta - Ferrer, Belsue, Abelardo, Nadal, Hierro (Kiko 53), Luis Enrique (Alfonso 53), Guerrero (Donato 53), Pizzi, Amor (Lopez 53; Molina 77), Manjarin.

Apr 24 - Bucharest - intl friendly
ROMANIA 5 (Moldovan 25, 30, 37, Lacatus 50, Gilca 86)
GEORGIA 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 11,500. **Ref:** Zachariadis (Gre)
Romania: Stelea (Prunea 63) - Filipescu, Belodedici (Dobos 65), Prodan (Mihali 65), Munteanu, Sabau (Craioveanu 50), Popescu (Gilca 60), Lupescu, Hagi (Contra 64), Lacatus (Selymes 50), Moldovan (Vladoiu 60).
Georgia: Devadze - Revishvili, Tskhadadze (Sepashvili 77), Kudinov, Chikhradze, Jamarauli (Guchua 46), Nemsadze (Gogrichiani 46), Gogichaishvili (Ionanidze 63), Arveladze (Tskitishvili 46), Ketsbaia, Kinkladze.

Apr 24 - Trnava - intl friendly
SLOVAKIA 0
BULGARIA 0
Att: 11,000. **Ref:** Vad (Hun)
Slovakia: Molnar - Tittel, Zeman, Karhan, Balis (Kozak 62), Tomaschek, Simon, Dubovsky, Moravcik, Ujlaky (Kinder 67), Timko.
Bulgaria: Mihailov (Zdravkov 46) - Kremenliev, Ivanov, Kishishev, Yankov, Kiryakov (Genchev 62), Kostadinov, Sirakov (Hristov 75), Borimirov, Balakov, Letchkov (Yordanov 64).

Apr 24 - Johannesburg - intl friendly
SOUTH AFRICA 2 (Masinga 25, Khumalo 42)
BRAZIL 3 (Flavio 56, Rivaldo 68, Bebeto 86)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 80,000. **Ref:** Ellery (Eng)
S Africa: Arendse - Motaung, Radebe, Fish, Tovey - Tinkler, Moeti (Masilela 73), Khumalo (Madigage 66), Mkhalele - Masinga, Bartlett (Stober 83).
Brazil: Dida - Ze Maria, Aldair, Alexandre Lopes, Andre Luis - Flavio, Amaral, Jamelli (Ze Elias 46), Rivaldo - Bebeto, Savio.

Apr 24 - Lugano - intl friendly
SWITZERLAND 2 (Coleman og 32, Turkyilmaz 42)
WALES 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 8,500. **Ref:** Stafoggia (Ita)
Switzerland: Pascolo (Lehmnn 84) - Vogel (Hottiger 46), Vega, Henchoz, Quentin, Ohrel (Lombardo 64), Sforza, Wicky (Koller 84), Turkyilmaz (Comisetti 85), Grassi (Knup 76), Chapuisat (Sutter 64).
Wales: Coyne (Marriott 46) - Robinson, Symons, Bowen, Coleman (Edwards 88), Legg (Speed 30), Jones, Horne (Savage 65), Pembridge, Hartson, Taylor (Davies 46).

Apr 24 - Belgrade - WC Euro gp 6
YUGOSLAVIA 3 (Savicevic 3, 30, Milosevic 38)
FAROE ISLANDS 1 (Petersen 54)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Bec (Lie)
Yugoslavia: Kocic - Curcic (Mirkovic 75), Djorovic, Jokanovic, Brnovic, Mihajlovic (Pantic 40), Jugovic, Savicevic, Mijatovic, Stojkovic, Milosevic (Nadj 87).
Faroes: Knudsen - Oli Johannsen, J C Hansen, A Hansen, J Johnsson, A Morkoere, M Jarnskor, Dam, Muller, J Petersen, J E Rasmussen (M Jarnskor 75).

SATURDAY, APRIL 27

Apr 27 - Doha - intl friendly
QATAR 3 (Kaouari 18, M Moubarak 55, 67 pen)
KUWAIT 1 (Souleyman 47)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Al-Kouri (Qatar)

SUNDAY, APRIL 28

Apr 28 - Kinshasa - intl friendly
ZAIRE 3 (Ntondelua 12, 25, Ayembe 91)
CONGO 1 (A Mkeoua 63 pen)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 4,000

TUESDAY, APRIL 30

Apr 30 - Tel-Aviv - friendly intl
ISRAEL 4 (Revivo 79, 87, Banin 81 pen, Zohar 90)
SOUTH KOREA 5 (Hong Kim 5, Song Chou 37, Yong Sin 40, Sun Hwang 55, 56 pen)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 2,500. **Ref:** Onsel Ciman (Tur)
Israel: Ginsburg (R Cohen 46) - Halfon (Jano 46), G Brumer, Shelah, Glam - Hazan (Benado 46), Klinger, Banin, Berkowitz (Attar 60) - Mizrahi (Zohar 46), Revivo.
S Korea: Sang Che (Kim Bong-su 74) - Haki Ta (Aik Yang-li 68), Hong Biong-bo, Tao Yang-sin (Kuang An 60), Hong Chin - Kang Choi (Seng Lee 64), Ah Sok-cho, Chang Wan-ko (Hok Doo 71), Yang Bo-suk - Sung Hong, Chin Hom-kim.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 1

May 1 - Mielec - intl friendly
POLAND 1 (Kowalczyk 8)
BYELORUSSIA 1 (Kachuro 63)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Herman (Ger)
Poland: Szczesny - Jozwiak, Zielinski, Ratajczak - Iwan, Gesior, Michelski (Staniek 46), Wieszczycki, Baluszynski (Bednarz 67) - Juskowiak (Saganowski 67), Kowalczyk.
Byelorussia: Chantalosov (Sasunkevich 46) - Orieknikov, Chachkievich, Rodnienik - Dovnar (Katchuro 46), Tchajka (Kulchi 55), Maleiv (Klimovich 86), Romachenko, Sinishin (Chripatsch) - Bielkevich, Kachensev.

May 1 - Samsun - friendly intl
TURKEY 3 (Hakan 3, Faruk 13, Tugay 32)
UKRAINE 2 (Shevchenko 10, Guseinov 34)
HT: 3-2. **Att:** 10,000
Turkey: Sanver - Recep (Sinan 46), Rahim, Alpay, Tugay, Vedat (Bulent 85), Faruk (Umit 69), Erkan, Hakan (Saffet Sancakli 46), Sergen (Saffet Aykuz 88), Engin (Ertugrul 46).
Ukraine: Suslov - Luzhni, Kardash (Rebrov 70), Solovko, Shmatovalenko, Parfenov, Orbu (Skripnik 46), Jabchenko (Pokhlebaiev 55), Shevchenko, Zotov (Mihailenko 35), Guseinov.

SATURDAY, MAY 4

May 4 - Bayamon - WC CONCACAF qual
PUERTO RICO 1 (Legris 80 pen)
ST VINCENT & GRENADINES 2 (Huggins 19, Hinds 55)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 1,000.

SUNDAY, MAY 5

May 5 - Basseterre - WC CONCACAF qual
ST KITTS & NEVIS 5 (Alleres 5, 88, Sargeant 20, 40, Cumbs 37)
ST LUCIA 1 (John 53)
HT: 4-0. **Att:** 500

May 5 - Diriamba - WC CONCACAF qual
NICARAGUA 0
GUATEMALA 1 (Plata 30)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 3,500

May 5 - Washington - intl friendly
EL SALVADOR 1 (Rivera 30)
BOLIVIA 1 (Suarez 4)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 4,000.

May 5 - St Dominique - WC CONCACAF qual
DOMINICA 2 (Jimenez 38, Cuevas 75)
NETHERLANDS ANTILLES 1 (Gisberta 45)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 1,500

WEDNESDAY, MAY 8

May 8 - Ioannina - intl friendly
GREECE 2 (D Nikolaidis 59, 87)
GEORGIA 1 (Gogrichiani 15)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 13,000. **Ref:** Zilfo (Alb)
Greece: Atmatzidis (Mihopoulos 46) - Apostolakis (Konstantinidis 46), Ouzounidis (Karataidis 46), Kalitzakis, Kassapis - Zagorakis, Alexandris (Vryzas 46), G H Georgiadis, Tsartas (Franzeskos 46) - Nikolaidis, Donis (Batista 46; Naciopoulos 56).
Georgia: Zoidze (Togonidze 17) - Gudusauri (Dimitradze 46), Lombanidze, Kudinov, Chikradze - Gogitchaishvili, Nemsadze, R Arveladze, Ketsbaia - Gogrichiani (Guchoua 55), S Arveladze.

THURSDAY, MAY 9

May 9 - Helsingborg - intl friendly
SWEDEN 2 (Dahlin 51, Ingesson 85)
SLOVAKIA 1 (Zeman 65)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,798

FRIDAY, MAY 10

May 10 - Guatemala City - WC CONCACAF qual
GUATEMALA 2 (Plata 62, 66)
NICARAGUA 1 (Jerez 86)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 12,000
Guatemala won 3-1 on agg

SUNDAY, MAY 12

May 12 - Beirut Asiari Cup qual
LEBANON 3 (Wael Nazha 28, Jamal Taha 67, Shadi Karnib 90)
TURKMENISTAN 1 (Qostantine Bondoyev 19)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** M. Majed (Bahr)
Lebanon: Ahmed Sakr - Salim Hamzeh, Abbas Shahrour, Ibrahim Hussni; Korkein Inkebarian, Babkin Malekian: Jamal Taha, Armin Golbadarian; Shadi Karneeb, Vartan Gazarian, W Nazha.
Turkmenistan: Vitali Kafanov - Youri Megdiev, Igor Shoumylov, Tofik Choukourov; Vitali Tepliakov, Youri Borodolimov, Konstantin Potduev; Sergey Plyushenko, Agaev Mouslim, Vitali Zolotoukhen, Rakhim Kourbanmamedov.

May 12 - George Town - WC CONCACAF qual
CAYMAN ISLANDS 0
CUBA 1 (Darcourt 10)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 6,000.

May 12 - Caitien - WC CONCACAF qual
HAITI 6 (Chevalier 10, Pierre 35, 59, Chauvet 63, 67, 70)
GRENADA 1 (own goal 86)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 8,000.

May 12 - Kingstown - WC CONCACAF qual
ST VINCENT & GRENADINES 7 (Jack 3, 23, 34, Hinds 15, 59, Jose 40, Childs 64)
PUERTO RICO 0
HT: 5-0. **Att:** 2,800
St Vincent won 9-1 on agg

WEDNESDAY, MAY 15

May 15 - George Town - WC CONCACAF qual
CAYMAN ISLANDS 0
CUBA 5
HTL: 0-1. **Att:** 3,000.
Cuba won 6-0 on agg

THURSDAY, MAY 16

May 16 - Seoul - intl friendly
SOUTH KOREA 0
SWEDEN 2 (Dahlin 8, Limpar 58)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 60,000. **Ref:** P Unprasert (Thai)
S Korea: Kim Bong-soo - Hong Myung-bo, Huh Ki-tae, Kang Chul, Park Jung-bae, Shin Hong-gi, Ha Seok-ju, Sin Tae-yong, Ko Jeong-woon (Han Jung-kook 46), Seo Jung-won (Roh Sang-rae 59), Kim Hyun-seok (Park Kun-ha 46).
Sweden: B Andersson - R Nilsson, P Andersson, Bjorklund, Mild, Thern, Limpar, Zetterberg, Sundgren, K Andersson, Dahlin.

SATURDAY, MAY 18

May 18 - St George's - WC CONCACAF qual
GRENADA 0
HAITI 1 (Pierre 50)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,500
Haiti won 7-1 on agg

May 18 - Wembley - Intl friendly
ENGLAND 3 (Anderton 38, 62, Platt 52)
HUNGARY 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 34,184. **Ref:** Merk (Ger)
England: Seaman (Walker 65), Pearce, Anderton, Ince (Campbell 65), Wilcox, Ferdinand (Shearer 77), Neville, Wright (Southgate 12), Lee, Platt (Wise 65), Sheringham.
Hungary: Petry, Hahn, Banfi, Plokai, Mracsko (Aranyos 81), Urban, Sebok, Nagy (Telek 81), Balog (Illes 61), Horvath (Lisztes 81), Vincze (Egressy 79).

SUNDAY, MAY 19

May 20 - Bridgetown - WC CONCACAF qual
BARBADOS 1 (Goodridge 75)
DOMINICA 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 4,500
Barbados won 2-0 agg

May 20 - Castries - WC CONCACAF qual
ST LUCIA 0
ST KITTS 1 (Kelly-Allers 50)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 1,800
St Kitts won 6-1 on agg

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LAST WORD

Inexperienced? So what?

You don't have to have been a horse to be a jockey

BOBBY ROBSON went into the 1990 World Cup finals knowing he would quit as England's team manager as soon as they were over. Terry Venables confronts the finals of the European Championship, on English soil, aware not only of his own departure, but of the fact that Glenn Hoddle has been named in his place and, somewhat controversially, has been excluded from England's training sessions.

Readers will be aware that I feel Venables was appointed some five years too late and, given his various legal problems, was a seriously unwise choice: made, as we know, over Bert Millichip's dead body.

Laughing at the new boy . . . Glenn Hoddle and Terry Venables

I don't object to the coronation of Hoddle, though my own preference would have been for the more experienced, perhaps more resilient, Gerry Francis. All roads, these days, appear to lead to Tottenham, however circuitously.

To damn Hoddle on the grounds of his relative managerial inexperience, however, seems silly and irrelevant. How many clubs had Franz Beckenbauer managed when he was put in charge of the West German international team? He went on to reach two consecutive World Cup Finals, and won the second.

The same rhetorical question may be posed of Michel Platini, who had never been a club manager when France appointed him. Certainly he did not have the huge success of Beckenbauer: but he did not disgrace himself.

Less important, it seems to me, than Hoddle's resplendent if inadequately appreciated career as a player is the *kind* of player that he was. An original, a creator, a virtuoso. Just the kind, in fact, which has been seen with such suspicion in English football down the years.

Stanley Matthews now is seen as some kind of secular saint, but for so many years he was in and out of the England team. Indeed, after a very early international, at 19, against Italy in the notorious 1934 Battle of Highbury, Geoffrey Simpson, the *Daily Mail* columnist, accused him of "slowness and hesitation," speculating that perhaps he did not have "the big-match temperament".

Oh, boy!

After the war, Tom Finney replaced Matthews on the England right wing, until the selectors suddenly woke up to the fact that the naturally left-footed Finney could play outside-left, and picked both of them against Portugal in 1947. England won 10-0, away. A year later, the same pair tied Italy in knots in Turin, and England won 4-0.

But in 1950, Matthews did not even, initially, make the cut in the England World Cup party for Brazil. He was brought in at the very last moment.

Hoddle, humiliated by the Great Guru of creative football, Ron Greenwood, after a brilliant debut against Bulgaria ("Disappointment is part of football," said Our Ron, promptly dropping Glenn), snubbed for so long by Bobby Robson, will at least have much sympathy with his own kind; where he can find them.

Robson, true, did turn full circle. After grudgingly playing Hoddle on the right wing in 1985, he raved about him in England's 1986 American training camp, saying he had never thought before he would find anybody to compare with Johnny Haynes. Which moved me, as you may remember, to observe that I had not known the Road to Damascus ran through Colorado Springs.

Hoddle has a pleasant sense of humour, but he can get downcast and depressed when things go wrong with his teams, and in his new job there is an awful lot of time to brood. He will not even have the handy distraction of all Venables' court cases.

To be a good international manager . . . you simply have to be a good international manager

One tactical point. Venables now espouses back-tracking wingers. Hoddle prefers attacking wing-backs. So England will change, again.

Pursuing this theme, I suggest that in order to be a good international manager . . . you simply have to be a good international manager. More precisely, having managed a club for a longer or shorter period, or not at all, having been a pro player, an international player of renown, or no kind of player at all, is pretty well irrelevant.

The Italian team, among the favourites for Euro 96, will be managed in England by Arrigo Sacchi, who started coaching because his local amateur club, Fusignano, told him he would never make a player. Which he never did, though he reminds us, "You don't have to have been a horse to be a jockey."

Vittorio Pozzo, who won two World Cups with Italy between the wars, was a moderate amateur with the original Torino team, but as an international manager, he was remarkable. True, the nationalistic times helped him gain the ascendancy over his teams. But he never would have been as crass as Sacchi has been, at various times, with Roberto Baggio, Gianluca Vialli and Beppe Signori.

To be fair, Signori has at last admitted that he was wrong to tell Sacchi he did not want to play deep left wing in the 1994 World Cup semi-final; thereby ruling himself out of the final as well.

As against that, Sacchi surely was wrong to play him there; and, at a previous game, to upset him by telling the press before the player that he was being dropped.

FOLLIES ON 5

DEAD HORSES flogged while you wait. The bankruptcy of Radio 5 Live's commentating policy never has been so cruelly shown up as on the last Sunday of the League season, with a host of games being played which would decide championship, promotion and relegation.

In Italy, Spain or France, they would have dodged, as always, from game to game. Not the Beeb. Oh, no. They gave us Alan Green, solid, all 90 minutes, at Middlesbrough v Manchester United, with occasional interpolations when a goal was scored elsewhere, and a scrap of John Champion at the end.

I bow to nobody in my admiration of Alan Green's ability to make high drama out of the merest throw-in, to reach fever pitch at the award of a corner, but isn't it time 5 Live renegotiated their Premiership deal and took us out of the age of Raymond Glendenning?

NEW DEN, OLD STORY

PETER MEAD, Millwall's chairman, always has been an advertising man, he tells us, and wouldn't you just know it from his programme notes on the Millwall v Birmingham game?

He thanked the fans for their impeccable behaviour INSIDE the New Den. Outside, 150 of them tried to attack Birmingham fans' coaches and were charged by police horses. Yes, I know Millwall's fans were shamefully treated at St. Andrews, but facts are facts.

At Ipswich, on that last Sunday, after Millwall had been sent down, the local police, incredibly, did not hold their fans back but let the whole lot out together. Mayhem followed. My Deep Throat – a Millwall sympathiser – was in the middle of it.

One note of black comedy. A Millwall fan limped into the railway station. He'd been stabbed, he said, he'd lost his watch; but his pockets jingled. He'd "done" a fruit machine at the ground.

It's an ill wind . . .

À la guerre comme à la guerre, as they say in France. *La guerre* was what I typed, for my last column. Somehow it came out as *le guere*. Ouch!

Next month in WORLD SOCCER

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